

VLADIMIR SHCHERBINA

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AND
PROBLEMS
OF
LITERATURE

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I

LENIN AND THE DESTINIES OF CULTURE

Besides their economic, political and philosophical teaching the works of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and V I Lenin contain a logical system of views on literature and art. These basic aesthetic principles are a reliable compass to go by in the intricate problems of artistic creativity.

Lenin did not simply set down the general programme principles, but also gave us some classical examples of literary criticism. His articles and statements on Herzen, Belinsky, Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov, Saltykov-Shchedrin, Turgenev, Gleb Uspensky, Lev Tolstoi and Gorky are extremely helpful in literary research.

But Lenin's views on literature cannot be fully understood if taken in isolation from his general, basic views on the development of human society as a whole. Therefore, his thoughts about literature must be studied and creatively developed in the light of his philosophical, historical and political views.

It is quite understandable that the enemies of socialism are trying hard to discredit the views of the founders of Marxism-Leninism on art, its nature and development. But then even people who consider themselves Marxists are often apt to belittle the contribution made by Marx, Engels and Lenin to the theory of literature and art. They say that the classics of Marxism did not make a special study of art and its problems, and only took them up apropos, and consequently merely expressed their opinion in single instances, making no claim to anything like a balanced system of aesthetic views.

The development of history and the theory of literature have long disclosed for the unbiased the consistency and integrity of the aesthetic views professed by Marx and Engels and further enriched by Lenin on the basis of the new social experience and the advance of scientific thought and art

The ideas voiced in Lenin's works have made the fundamentals of our aesthetics, showing us how to critically assimilate the classical heritage of the past and how to go about building a new socialist art. Lenin always stood for truth in art, and promulgated the principles of partisan ship in literature. He took up arms against reactionary art, whether it was manifested in pedestrian naturalistic descriptiveness or any of the forms of decadence

Lenin's various statements on matters concerning literature and the arts are linked together by a single, all permeating idea of theoretically and historically justified innovation and the steadily growing role of socialist culture in the spiritual life of our epoch

Rejecting the notion alleging that the working masses were incapable of independent creativity in the sphere of spiritual life, Lenin offered a revolutionary solution to the problem of "culture and the people" which had become acute in the 20th century. In this matter Lenin took the opposite view to those who estranged the people's masses from the process of creating culture and attempted to present the ruling classes as the sole makers of spiritual values

According to this point of view, appreciation of genuine artistic values was supposed to be beyond the working masses. Contrarily, Lenin elaborated the principles of his theory of cultural and artistic development as long ago as the end of the last century. This theory is based on the thesis that all the benefits of science, culture and art belong to the masses. In his "Draft of the Programme of the Social Democratic Party and Explanatory Notes" (1896), Lenin asserted that under socialism the products obtained by common endeavour would "go to benefit the working people themselves while the surplus they produce over and above their keep will serve to satisfy the needs of the workers themselves, to secure the full development of all their capabilities and equal rights to enjoy all the achievements of science and art."¹

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works* Vol 2, p. 108.

Lenin developed the socialist concept of cultural progress in his subsequent works enriching it with new historical experience. He disputed the point of view shared by Struve, Berdyaev, Gertz and Bulgakov who declared that Marxism, "pandering to fanaticism and its insulted aesthetic feeling" had allegedly "renounced the rich treasure stores of art and science, without which progress is impossible." In answer to this assertion made by Gertz, Lenin set out the principles on which a new genuinely popular culture would flourish in conditions of socialism. He pointed out that the party of the working class was capable of appreciating the services rendered to history by the great centres of energy and culture which is by no means incompatible with the socialist ideal of obliterating the contrasts between town and country.

"It is not true that this is tantamount to abandoning the treasures of science and art," Lenin said. "Quite the contrary this is necessary in order to bring these treasures within the reach of the entire people, in order to abolish the alienation from culture of millions of the rural population which Marx aptly described as the idiocy of rural life. And at the present time when it is possible to transmit electric power over long distances when the technique of transport has been so greatly improved that it is possible at less cost (than at present) to carry passengers at a speed of more than 200 versts an hour there are absolutely no technical obstacles to the enjoyment of the treasures of science and art which for centuries have been concentrated in a few centres by the whole of the population, spread more or less evenly over the entire country."¹

This view is opposed to the numerous theories which regarded the people as a destructive or a creatively and intellectually passive force. All the manifestos of the decadents and the books of Minsky, Merezhkovsky, Berdyaev and Shestov breathe contempt for the working masses and deny the very possibility that they might participate in artistic creativity. These anti-popular, élite views in the sphere of culture were most blatantly manifested in the years of reaction 1907-1910 and then again when the socialist revolution was coming to a head and during its accomplishment in 1917.

The liberal intellectuals, taking their cue from the theo-

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works*, Vol 5, p 154

reticians of the philosophical, historical and spiritual decadence, tried to assert that the bourgeoisie was the sole maker of culture. In his *Critical Notes* P. Struve insisted that modern spiritual and material culture in its entirety was bound up with the activity of the bourgeoisie and had grown up together with capitalism in bourgeois soil. This prompted the well known conclusion "Let us admit our lack of culture and apprentice ourselves to the capitalists. The idea that creating spiritual values was alien to the people's masses was expressed with the utmost sharpness in the renegade collection *Vekhi* (Milestones) evoking Lenin's harsh disapproval.

The shaping of a socialist culture and a new art was regarded by Lenin as an organic part of the revolutionary transformation of life and of the upsurge in the masses' political and spiritual activity. The soil for it had to be prepared by drawing the entire people into the work of building up a new life and a new culture. Lenin pointed out as long ago as 1905: "To become great, to evoke 1789-1793, not 1848-1850, and to surpass those years the revolution must rouse the vast masses to active life, to heroic efforts, to fundamental historic creativeness, it must rouse them out of their frightful ignorance, their unparalleled oppression."¹

Lenin's all-embracing historico-philosophical theory, his well grounded conviction that socialist revolution and the establishment of socialism made the substance of 20th century history, the main motive power of social progress, and the decisive factor in the political and spiritual development of the modern world must be studied in order to understand the laws that govern the development of culture in the 20th century.

Lenin held that finding a solution to the problems of the new culture was inseparable from the main task of rousing the people's masses to conscious historical activity. It was for this, he said, that "a broad plan for the reconstruction of Russia will be drawn up."² By constantly and consistently linking the question of creating a new, socialist culture with the plan of Russia's revolutionary reconstruction, Lenin stressed the efficacious, revolutionary nature of progressive art and literature as a force which, using its

¹ See V I Lenin *Collected Works* Vol. 8, p. 291.

² V I Lenin, *Collected Works* Vol. 30, p. 343.

own specific means, participated in the rebuilding of the world and in the shaping of the new man

The idea of the revolutionary efficacy of art its participation in the solution of the epoch's main historic tasks, and its responsibility for the destinies of mankind runs through all his reflections on the roads that might be taken by the progress of spiritual culture in the revolutionary epoch

The pace taken by history from the beginning of this century rendered the problem of the further development of world culture especially acute, which always happens in times of large social upheavals Naturally, the problem became most acute and urgent during the mounting and accomplishment of the socialist revolution and in the period of socialism's establishment which meant a radical change in the spiritual life of the masses Nowhere Lenin said, were the problems of culture raised with such consistency and on such a scale as in Russia the first country to embark on the road to socialism

Contrary to sectarian, restrictive and vulgar views, Lenin placed the development of socialist culture in the mainstream of the advancing world civilisation and mankind's spiritual progress

Lenin's thoughts on the development of literature and art in the modern age are as fresh today As everyone knows, all modernistic theories speak of the crisis of realism as something predetermined by history, and of the inevitability of it being superseded by abstract, objectless forms of art which, they allege, best express the world outlook of the modern man Scientific literary criticism advances a different view, based on facts which asserts that art, in its various forms, is on the ascent to a higher stage of realism socialist realism

The concept of general cultural and artistic progress in the 20th century so clearly expressed in Lenin's works gives us the key to a creative assessment of all the problems of literature and art against the background of the continuous movement of history It is extremely important to have well founded objective criteria of artistic progress in order to be able to sort out for oneself the various, heterogeneous phenomena in the art of our times, to correctly assess its main trends and solve the problems connected with it As we all know, the concept of progress, just like

a number of concepts has been subjected to a painstaking "blurring of late

The highest criterion of social progress according to Lenin is the development of productive forces in the broadest meaning of the word implying a better life for the people's masses a better life for man in every respect.

The ways of social progress are historically contradictory and complicated But at the present time, according to the highest criterion advanced by Lenin, the progressiveness of a phenomenon is measured in the first place, by its usefulness to the interests of society and people by the humaneness of its purpose and its effectiveness The biggest scientific technical discovery does not yet mean that it is progressive if it is used for anti humanist aims in much the same way as the most intricate and sophisticated word painting does not always signify progress in art It is really compounded of different processes and phenomena in different trends Innovation is of course the chief form Progress in art whatever the epoch means embracing a wider sphere of life probing deeper into man's inner world and introducing new expressive means Reality in its development engenders new features in society and in individuals and also suggests the new means of embodying them in art

The scientific criteria of progress have been evolved from the experience of world art The idea of all-embracing and all involving progress is already there in Lenin's articles on Lev Tolstoi Tolstoi's writing is qualified as a step forward in the artistic development of mankind which is an assertion of progress in the sphere of art Here the main criteria are the depth and impressiveness with which the epoch is described the portrayal of essential new aspects of life the prominence given to problems of vital importance in the existence of the masses the power of artistic impact and the discovery of new creative possibilities in literature It is these qualities, Lenin believes that make Tolstoi one of the world's greatest writers

Lenin looked upon the emergence and development of literature that championed socialism as a new expression of advance in world art Gorky and several writers in other countries were the first to describe the revolutionary awakening of the masses and to portray the commencement of the socialist era

In Lenin's opinion the emergence and establishment of socialist art was the greatest and most important innovation of the age liberating the writer from the hostile and stifling rule of the private-ownership society deepening the realistic humane content of literature, and drawing the masses into the creative process

Speaking on general problems of art, on the work of Soviet and foreign revolutionary writers and Gorky in particular Lenin clearly defined the scientific criteria of artistic progress in the modern age His stand is both historically and theoretically opposed to those distorted notions which see innovation in the de-humanisation of art, in its renouncement of history in the destruction of imagery, and the blunting of expressive means

At the beginning of this century Lenin countered the existing opinion that the de-humanisation of culture and the growth of anti-democratic élite trends signified progress He asserted that the criterion of social and artistic progress was signified by the revolutionary humane content of literature and by the assessment of all processes and phenomena from the point of view of the masses At that time Minsky Merezhkovsky and other decadent writers declared that renunciation of civil ideological and educational responsibilities and the promotion of art for the chosen few for the élite were the main indications that culture was moving forward Lenin challenged these views by advancing principles of partisanship and service to the people

There is reason to suppose that many of the mistakes made in interpreting problems of culture were due to a lack of understanding or appreciation of this chief criterion of one or another spiritual phenomenon's progressiveness Replying to the "Open Letter from a Specialist" in *Pravda* (March 28 1919) Lenin stated that correct conclusions can be arrived at only if events are discussed from the mass point of view and from the point of view of their actual consecutiveness Developing this thought further Lenin stressed that events had to be analysed from the mass and not the personal point of view ¹

This criterion is of great importance in art and all spheres of culture since it defines the type of progressive

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works* Vol. 29 p 230

artist, the concept of creative individuality as such and the nature and purpose of art

In Lenin's works on philosophy history and art, the revolutionary progress of society is defended and given a well founded explanation. Theories which deny progress in art are based on notions of immutability in the nature of man and society and those who uphold these theories want to prove that the essence of art is irrational and that ideological political and social questions are foreign to its nature. This dissociation of art from history wholly restricts it to the sphere of intuition and encourages it to assert only its individual, inimitable character. According to these notions the entire history of world art is reduced to an accumulation of different phenomena between which no comparison can be drawn. It follows that the concept of progress in art cannot be potent. This point of view is most clearly set out in the works of Benedetto Croce whose *Aesthetic* was published in Russian translation in 1920.

Croce denies progress as a definite reality, as a social regularity. With him the concept of progress merely means a subjectivistic idea of "human activity" "point of view" and "apperception" which isolates a definite systematised notion from a mass of disorderly unstudied facts.

By developing a pointedly intuitionist attitude to the very nature of art Croce arrives at the conclusion that there is no such thing as mankind's aesthetic progress. In his view the genius of each artist is inevitably confined to its individual sphere and precludes any historical comparisons. His art is inimitable as inimitable as individuality. "Art is intuition, and intuition is individuality and individuality does not repeat itself." ¹ Croce writes. Further more he says that the history of mankind's artistic creativity must not be broken up into phases of progress and regress for "Shakespeare does not represent advance on Dante nor Goethe upon Shakespeare."

Every individual creates his own artistic world. These worlds cannot be compared in the sense of artistic value and they are not linked by tradition. Such are Croce's main arguments summed up in the general conclusion that there are no laws governing the historical course of art.

¹ Benedetto Croce *Aesthetic as Science of Expression and General Linguistic* London, 1922 p. 136.

Croce singles out from the history of aesthetic notions only the closed progressive or regressive cycles which, in each case, possessed their own individual destiny. The concept of aesthetic progress may be used merely to mean a qualitative accumulation of works of art, which he calls "artistic intuitions." According to a number of modern literary scholars this, allegedly, gives rise to the very latest scientific view of a work of art as a sealed structure.

These arguments are significant because they reflect the common and most widespread views on historical progress shared by anti-realist, both intuitionist and formalist aesthetics in the first decade of this century. Many of Croce's aesthetic tenets were utilised by the school of formalism in the nineteen twenties, and are being used by such of its vestigial modern branches as, for instance, the American New Criticism.

Indeed, looking upon the question from positions of intuitionism and formalism, which dissociate art from life, the concept of aesthetic progress cannot, of course, exist. The notion of art as a collection of works produced by isolated creative individualities dwelling in their securely walled-in intuitive worlds, has always served as a basis for a complete repudiation of artistic progress. Contrarily, for materialist aesthetics, which perceives the movement of art in the stream of historical and spiritual life in its entirety, the concept of artistic progress is one of the basic concepts expressing the objective course of art's development.

Lenin's criticism of pessimistic, anti-revolutionary historical and philosophical views is also extremely important for correctly interpreting the development of art and the problems connected with it.

The history of literature repudiates the theory of isolated cultural and artistic progress, accomplished according to a pattern that fatally repeats the same types of mentality and varieties of art. The groundlessness of this theory of patterns can be most clearly judged from the development of literature in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. According to the champions of this theory of a predetermined uniformity in the development of world art, all literatures must pass through the stage of realism, symbolism, expressionism, impressionism and all types of modernism known in our day before they can rightfully call themselves

modern and enter the period of socialist art. In other words, all literatures are invited to follow the uniform road without any deviations, charted and well trodden in Western Europe. Artistic progress outside the framework of this pattern is declared unthinkable, futile, and simply null and void.

The best confirmation of the organic connection between the progress of 20th century art and the awakening of the people's masses is to be found in the emergence of a novel revolutionary art which has given the world such major writers of a new type as Gorky, Mayakovsky, Sholokhov, Louis Aragon, Paul Eluard, Becher, Nezval, Broniewski, Fučík, Barbusse, Nexø, Lu Hsun, Amado, Neruda, Sean O'Casey and Sadoveanu. Socialism had a decisive influence on the work of Romain Rolland, Theodore Dreiser, John Galsworthy and H. G. Wells, and brought new traits into the whole of world literature.

We want to stress, however, that neither Lenin nor Marx equated social progress with progress in art. This largely determines the peculiarities of Lenin's theory on the development of 20th century art.

The historical and theoretical purport of Lenin's views on the principal phenomena of 20th century literary progress calls for closer attention to such very general concepts as "20th century literature" and "20th century art." It is also imperative to establish what these concepts mean objectively since in many literary criticisms 20th century is given a most specific interpretation. As a rule, the authors of these criticisms have a relatively small group of writers in mind: in the first place Joyce, Proust and Kafka. All the modernist trends, their principles and heroes, are unreservedly included in 20th century literature, and yet Gorky, Theodore Dreiser and Romain Rolland are either made no mention of or are pointedly excommunicated from the ranks of 20th century innovators.

The establishment of realism as the leading system of 20th century art, with its innovatory ramifications, greater variety of form and larger creative possibilities, made the basis of Lenin's views on art.

He drew up the general principles and charted the course of development for the art of socialism not just in theory alone. From the stream of books written in the past and the present age he singled out with his great perspicacity

the works which ushered in the innovatory system of socialist realism

Lenin's article Eugene Potier which elucidates the sources and problems of socialist culture is still as topical today. He calls Potier a worker poet, a proletarian poet, the foremost fighter for the working class who responded to all great events in the life of France with militant songs, awakening the consciousness of the backward.¹ Along with the *Internationale* he mentions the poem written by Potier in exile From American Workers to the Workers of France in which he describes the life of workers under capitalism, their poverty, their back breaking toil, their exploitation, and their confidence that their cause will eventually triumph. Lenin calls the *Internationale* a proletarian song not just because it was written by a proletarian poet but mainly because workers in all countries picked it up and made it their own popular song.

The role played by revolutionary poetry in shaping the mentality of millions of workers, in uniting them both politically and spiritually and in cultivating in them a sense of brotherly solidarity and a readiness to fight for their interests, is emphasised by Lenin in his characterisation of the *Internationale*. He writes: In whatever country a class conscious worker finds himself, wherever fate may cast him, however much he may feel himself a stranger, without language, without friends, far from his native country, he can find himself comrades and friends by the familiar refrain of the *Internationale*.²

Lenin regarded songs as one of those forms of art which exert an enormous influence on millions of people, on their mentality and their feelings. Potier died in poverty. But he left a memorial which is truly more enduring than the handiwork of man, Lenin concludes the article. He was one of the greatest *propagandists by song*. When he was composing his first song the number of worker socialists ran into tens, at most Eugene Potier's historic song is now known to tens of millions of proletarians.³

Lenin spoke of the emergence and establishment of new revolutionary culture as a decisive feature in the spiritual

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works* Vol 36 p 223.

² Ibid

³ Ibid p 224.

progress of mankind. He saw manifestations of it in all spheres of culture in literature, music and painting. He responded with an article to the jubilee of the workers' choral societies in Germany and wrote of their outstanding services in popularising socialism through song. Lenin saw a connection between the development of workers' choral societies and the growing revolutionary self-awareness and activity of the working people. He mentioned with satisfaction that the text of one workers' song was written by Georg Herwegh, a well-known poet. Lenin concluded the article with the following words: "No amount of police harassment can prevent the singing of the hearty proletarian song about mankind's coming emancipation from wage slavery in all the great cities of the world, in all the factory neighbourhoods and more and more frequently in the huts of village labourers."

Lenin attributed a large role in creating a new, proletarian art to Maxim Gorky. He saw in Gorky an enormous artistic talent which has been and will be of great benefit to the world proletarian movement.

He keenly followed the growth of revolutionary literature abroad and gladly helped revolutionary American writers John Reed, Albert Rhys Williams, Robert Minor, and people who were in sympathy with the Soviet system (Lincoln Stevens, Bessie Beatty).

Lenin missed none of the major events in the socialist literature of other countries. In 1922 he met the well-known Danish revolutionary writer Martin Andersen Nexø who gave Vladimir Ilyich and Nadezhda Konstantinovna a copy of his novel *Pelle the Conqueror* with the following inscription: "To the Comrades Krupskaya and Vladimir Ulyanov Lenin with thanks and good wishes. Theirs in love, Martin Andersen Nexø."

The attitude of foreign intellectuals to the young Soviet republic always interested Lenin. For instance, the article in *L'Humanité* written by a large group of prominent French intellectuals headed by Anatole France in which they protested against interference into the affairs of Soviet Russia and called for a cessation of the intervention and the blockade. Speaking at the Seventh All Russia Congress of

¹ V. I. Lenin *Collected Works* Vol. 36 p. 226

² *Ibid.* Vol. 23 p. 334.

Soviets, Lenin called this appeal "our third victory, a victory over imperialist France, within the country itself" ¹ He regarded it as evidence of the evolution in world public opinion which directed the minds of the more progressive intellectuals towards the ideas of socialism

The further career of Anatole France confirmed the correctness of Lenin's predictions. He allied himself with the communist movement and became a champion of revolutionary literature. Many other prominent writers went through the same evolution and devoted their talent to the development of socialist literature

* * *

There is no need to prove that socialist art developed in a completely novel and independent way. And yet many literati, tendentially minded or lacking spiritual breadth, ignore facts and strive to obscure the true course followed by modern art, in order to fit it into their uniform patterns

Lenin repeatedly pointed out the peculiarities of the completely novel socialist path along which society, culture and art developed. He never agreed with the view that the process had to be uniform in all the countries of the world and that in spiritual life the cycles of capitalist development had to be inevitably repeated everywhere

Socialist revolution opened new roads for the development of culture and art. Lenin asserted, and in his articles

On Co-operation and About Our Revolution he gave the fundamentals of the new laws governing the formation of a socialist culture. These articles are aimed against the pedantic stand of the petty bourgeois democrats who seemed utterly incapable of understanding the essence of the Marxist view on the real laws of society's advance and on the novel forms of historical development. Their imagination did not go beyond conventional reforms and they failed to take into account the revolutionary dialectics of the course of world history. They could not appreciate the new roads opened by the October Socialist Revolution nor could they accept the thought that conformity to the general laws of world historical development by no means precluded

¹ V. I. Lenin *Collected Works* Vol. 30 p. 218

but, on the contrary, presupposed novel and original forms of progress

The Menshevik Sukhanov declared that Russia had to take a course of training from West European capitalism and go through all its stages of political, economic and spiritual development before attempting to build socialism. In reply Lenin refuted the inevitability of all the countries repeating the cycles of bourgeois civilisation and outlined different ways of developing civilisation.

In the victory of socialist revolution he saw objective premises for creating new forms of life. He was convinced that the new social system, by drawing the masses into conscious historical activity and by increasing the powers of the workers and peasants a hundredfold, offered us the opportunity to create the fundamental requisites of civilisation in a different way from that of the West European countries.¹

Lenin refuted the arguments of the petty bourgeois democrats that objective premises for socialism had not yet ripened in Russia and culture had not yet reached the required level. In outlining the course of cultural development in our country, Lenin repelled the attempts of the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries to prove that the working class had first to attain the desired cultural level in conditions of bourgeois society, and only then take the reins of power into its own hands and start thinking of socialism.

If a definite level of culture is required for the building of socialism, Lenin wrote in 1923, "why cannot we begin by first achieving the prerequisites for that definite level of culture in a revolutionary way and then with the aid of workers and peasants government and the Soviet system, proceed to overtake the other nations?"²

Outlining the development of socialist culture, Lenin refuted the idea of restricting the growth of artistic and spiritual progress to its old established forms. The notion that all possible forms of the further development of world history had already been envisaged was to be dropped, Lenin said, and he proceeded to substantiate the novel

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works*, Vol 33 p 478.

² Ibid pp 438-39

principles on which socialist culture, literature and art should be built up

Present-day developments once again confirm the far sightedness of Lenin's views on socialist art and the correctness of his prediction made more than half a century ago, about the emergence of a new, revolutionary literature which, instead of pandering to the perverted tastes of the satiated, parasitical elite, would serve millions and millions of working people who are the flower of society, its strength and its future

The most progressive thinkers of the modern age linked the development of socialist literature with the revolutionary movement of the people's masses, with the beginning of the new historical process and the birth of the new man. In 1907, soon after the appearance of Lenin's famous article

Party Organisation and Party Literature, Gorky wrote: "What is happening today is more significant and important than we think. Against the general background we do not notice that we are standing at the beginning of a *new* historical process, that we are living in a day when a new *psychological* type is being born."¹

The novel features of socialist art, engendered by the specificity of the historical process and the emergence of a new psychological type, were first rendered in Soviet literature and embodied most distinctly in its ideological and artistic principles.

The affirmation of socialist art as the main factor furthering the progress of modern art is incompatible with the idea of uniformity in world progress developed in countless variants or consequently with the notion that repetition of all the laws and wanderings of the modernistic fad is historically inevitable everywhere. The idea of uniformity in world art progress has on the reverse side an apologia of the standards of the capitalist world. The purpose of denying the laws governing the development of the new socialist culture is, as in all the other spheres of political and spiritual life, to cultivate the trimmed down stereotypes of bourgeois art.

While the reactionaries and the fashion mongers refused to acknowledge the independent socialist development of Soviet Russia and its art, the best writers of the age were,

¹ M. Gorky *Collected Works* Vol 29 p 12 (in Russian).

on the contrary full of admiration for the spiritual culture of the liberated people and called it a feat that opened up new historical vistas for mankind as a whole. This is what H. G. Wells wrote to Gorky in a letter dated February 11, 1920. Russia has followed paths of her own and there has been a violent outcry against her and much propaganda of a violent sort but feeling in this country is rather curious than hostile. We don't understand we are perplexed, but there is a great faith here that at bottom the Russians are a purposeful great and gifted people playing and destined to play a leading part in the creation of a new world.

Thus, in the advance made by Soviet Russia along its own revolutionary road and in the novel principles of its spiritual life H. G. Wells and many other writers saw the premises for the flowering of a new and original culture.

Stefan Zweig also wrote to Gorky about the importance of the experience gained in socialist construction for the destinies of world culture. Unlike those writers who took a pessimistic anti-democratic view of the character and development of 20th century culture, Zweig regarded the creative powers of a great liberated people, whose image had been so truthfully created by Gorky as the beginning of the spiritual progress of the age. Speaking of the socialist transformation of Soviet Russia he says that a better acquaintance should be made with the Soviet state and its spiritual culture. "One has to re-adjust one's knowledge, one's feelings and all the notions one has become used to in order to appreciate all these happenings, and I am making every conceivable effort to understand everything as well as possible, whereas most of our intellectuals treat these questions with an indifference that is quite beyond me. Apparently they do not see or refuse to see that the fate of the next generation or even the next century perhaps, is being decided together with the fate of Russia."

The fifty years' experience of Soviet literature has irrefutably proved the erroneousness of the theory that the historically defined phases and principles of modernistic art were the universal norm, compulsory for world art in its entirety. This is further confirmed by the development of socialist literatures in many other countries and the spiritual influence they have gained.

II

LITERATURE AND REALITY IN LENIN'S VIEW

LITERATURE THE MIRROR OF THE PEOPLE'S LIFE

Lenin demanded that art should be truthful above all else and that this truth should be based on the knowledge of the laws of life's development and its concrete phenomena. In holding the truthfulness of art to be one of its main qualities, Lenin shared the views of the best progressive critics. Let us recall what Belinsky said of literature and talents: "Before they used to describe the non-existing and tell of what has never been, and now they re-create life the way it really is. This has greatly raised literature in the eyes of society."¹ A striving for artistic truth has always distinguished the work of the best Russian and world writers. The basic aesthetic ideas on bringing literature closer to life and on acknowledging the role played by art in shaping social thought, which classical critics regarded as the main feature of progressive literature's development, were elaborated further by Lenin and given a Marxist substantiation. Lenin demanded that writers should have a thorough knowledge of life, which was the main source from which art drew its strength and power of conviction, its ability to influence the minds and hearts of millions of people and to teach them how to think, feel and act correctly.

The concept of artistic truth has been pondered on and written about by nearly all the major authors. Gorky, for one, has given this concept a most comprehensive interpretation in his books.

¹ V. G. Belinsky *Collected Works*, Vol. X, Moscow 1956, p. 16 (in Russian).

As we very well know, the title of truth champions is claimed by representatives of the most diverse views and trends. However, they do not put the same meaning into the concept itself which very often clashes.

Idealist aesthetics, looking upon reality as a thing of little importance to art, says that truth is above all else the expression of the artist's isolated subjective impressions, no matter whether they correspond to the real image of the objective world or not. Naturalism, on the other hand, says that random photography of anything one sees is, in fact, the truth.

In interpreting the concept of artistic truth Lenin developed the principles of materialist aesthetics which by truth implies that the imaginative content of a work of art should correspond to the objective image of reality. Lenin's interpretation of art, as differing from subjective aesthetic theories, is that it is a special form of spiritual activity which has its own material basis, its specific features and objective laws. According to Lenin's theory the authenticity with which reality is represented is the main criterion of art and the supreme law it must obey.

Lenin gave a Marxist substantiation to the indissolubility of the cognitive and the ideological aspects of art. Progressive materialist aesthetics does not believe in juxtaposing these two aspects. Lenin never supported those authors who, ignoring the truth of life, merely wanted to set out their own subjectivistic views in *belles-lettres* form. In this respect he developed the views of Marx and Engels who denounced prejudice in art and criticised it in their correspondence with Ferdinand Lassalle.

Lenin regarded every serious work of literature as a live human document reflecting the epoch's actual historical processes and phenomena. It is quite natural, therefore, that in speaking of literature he always stressed its cognitive worth. Ilyich knew Russian literature well. Nadezhda Konstantinovna wrote in her recollections: "For him it was a means of cognising life. And the more fully, embracingly, and profoundly did a book reflect life, the more simple it was, the more Ilyich thought of it."¹ In practically every statement that Lenin made on problems of literature he

¹ V. I. Lenin on Literature and Art. Moscow 1960, p. 635 (in Russian).

mentioned how truthfully and profoundly this or that writer in one book or another succeeded in reflecting the life and the ideas of his day

It was from this angle that he characterised the works of Gogol Herzen Nekrasov Turgenev, Goncharov Lev Tolstoi Uspensky Gorky Veresayev Korolenko and others. What delighted Lenin in Chernyshevsky's novel *Prologue* was the remarkable accuracy and insight with which the author described the period of preparation for the reform of 1861, the life and the sentiments of the peasantry and drew the portraits of the "new people" the men active in the revolutionary-democratic movement.

According to Lenin, the work of Lev Tolstoi and every other truthful writer draws its material from and is based on objective reality firstly the life of the people reflected in the light of their world outlook and their individual genius. Lenin wrote: "if we have before us a really great artist he must have reflected in his work at least some of the essential aspects of the revolution."¹

He saw Tolstoi's greatness in the truthfulness with which he rendered the contradictions and the ruthless breaking up of the old established order that took place in post reform Russia. Tolstoi described the sentiments and condition of the masses downtrodden by the autocracy and the landlords and conveyed their spontaneous protest and indignation with truly remarkable power. He did not understand the revolution and clearly kept aside from it. And yet Lenin called Tolstoi the "mirror of the Russian revolution." In his novels Tolstoi reflected some essential aspects of the Russian revolution and consequently some of the main historical developments of his time. He found an amazingly eloquent embodiment for the historical specificity of the first Russian revolution, its strength and its weakness. Lenin draws particular attention to Tolstoi's rendering of the life of the popular masses.

Lenin frequently referred to Saltykov-Shchedrin who gave a sharp and truthful portrayal of the impoverishment of the rural world as capitalism developed in Russia after the reform of 1861. In Uspensky, Lenin admired his superb knowledge of the peasantry and his enormous gift of fathoming the innermost essence of a phenomenon.

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works* Vol 15 p 202

The penetration with which Lenin probed the nature of realist art is of basic importance for a scientific historical interpretation of the contradictions in the work of some of the classics for instance, Goethe, Balzac Gogol Turgenev and Lev Tolstoi as a reflection of the real historical contradictions of their time

Studying the literature of the past many researchers saw only the manifestation of an artist's subjective spiritual impulses that died away together with the times but looking upon the matter from Lenin's positions we fully appreciate the lasting worth of the values created by the great writers the ideological and cognitive importance of their works, and the part they played in the life of the people

The works of many great writers of the past are not free from misconceptions which must be blamed on the narrowness of their world outlook The Marxist Leninist theory of knowledge makes it possible to separate the writer's "judgement from his 'prejudice For example Lenin gave an accurate definition of Turgenev's and Tolstoi's political prejudices and misconceptions and brilliantly characterised the genuinely valuable and excellent in their works

There is such a thing as absolute irrefutable truth in art This truth contained in classical works is impervious to time and does not age The fundamental principle of truthfulness in art asserted by Lenin provides us with a key to the understanding of the tremendous influence unfading beauty and vitality of the classics and explains the development of socialist art an art that is powerful and inspired, novel both in content and form

* * *

Marxist Leninist theory presupposes a diversity of forms of human knowledge among these the complex and specific form of reflecting reality in literature

Lenin's theory of reflection enables us to define the nature of an artistic image and to appreciate that in art reality is reflected in concretely sensuous images and that the general is embodied in the individual character or a happening Artistic portrayal demands a wealth of concrete individual traits and their correct correlation Life must be represented visually and clearly These thoughts provide

us with a theoretical key to the cognition of the peculiarity of an artistic image and the peculiarity of the creative process itself In *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* Lenin underlines again and again the meaning of sense perception in literature His views on the nature of human knowledge orientate the artist to the representation of reality in all the concrete sensual fullness of its colours Lenin's thesis that there is more wealth in a phenomenon than in the law governing it is very much to the point "A beautiful formula" he commented on what Hegel said about the depth of life's cognisance being contained in the universal which 'comprises in itself the wealth of the particular the individual the single (all the wealth of the particular and single)!! Tres bien!¹ Lenin stressed cognition not of some abstract general but of a general that contained the wealth of the individual Marxist Leninist aesthetics proceeds from the organic fusion of general and individual features in art

In defining the essence of the individual in art, one should proceed from Lenin's thesis that a phenomenon has greater wealth than the law governing it The essence is the law governing the phenomenon But the essence is not the whole of the phenomenon Reducing the phenomenon to the essence means leaving all the emotional and spiritual wealth of man, all the fullness of real life, outside the limits of the image Restricting the portrayal of reality to its abstract essence impoverishes reality and deprives it of its wealth of colours

In his views on literature Lenin always noted what aspects of reality this or that writer dwelt on and from what positions What he regarded as the most significant processes in the social reality of his time were the political awakening of the masses the growth of their political consciousness the maturing and the accomplishment of the revolution

The most essential determining process of reality a process which followed the laws of development in the life of the masses was the maturing of the revolution enhanced by the glaring contradictions in the development of post reform Russia from 1861 to 1905 It was as impossible to truthfully portray the people's life of that period apart from the maturing revolution as it was impossible to describe the revolu-

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works* Vol 38 p 99

tionary movement as isolated from the life of the people

Lenin's articles on Lev Tolstoi are a classical example of what he actually meant by reflecting reality in art. The time of writing and the range of problems raised link these articles with *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* in which the Marxist theory of reflection is most fully expounded. Lenin's first article on Tolstoi was published in 1908 and the others were written soon after the completion of this book. The philosophical content of these articles is closely connected with the epistemological tenets of *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. Therefore Lenin's characterisation of Tolstoi as "the mirror of the Russian revolution" can best be understood in its theoretical sense, in the light of the scientific ideas expounded in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*.

Lenin's analysis of Tolstoi gives warning against idealistic interpretation and simplification. He shows the depth and originality with which the great writer reflected his day's reality, its decisive issues and the characters and conflicts of the social forces. In these articles Lenin indicates which of the aspects of reality, reflected with genius by Tolstoi, he thought most significant. Reality itself—that is the era of great changes in the life and consciousness of the masses which was described by Tolstoi and Gorky—was of great historical importance for the whole world and provided artists with abundant material. Lenin singled out, with full justice, the books which rendered the atmosphere of the mounting revolution and the upsurge in the revolutionary feelings of the masses. He saw a reflection of this process not only in the works of Tolstoi, Gorky and other Russian writers but also in the books of foreign authors singling out Henri Barbusse and John Reed for correctly reflecting the profound changes in the awareness of the masses.

The First World War of 1914-1918 further aggravated the glaring social contradictions and accelerated the growth of the masses' revolutionary consciousness. Lenin saw a confirmation of this in Barbusse's novels *Fire* and *Clarity*. This is what he wrote about these novels in his article *On the Tasks of the Third International*: "The transformation of an absolutely ignorant rank and file, utterly crushed by philistine ideas and prejudices, into a revolutionary under

the influence of the war, is depicted with extraordinary power talent and truthfulness ¹

At a later date, repeating this evaluation of Barbusse's novels as proof of the inevitable collapse of capitalism and the rise of the revolutionary masses Lenin invited attention to the similarity in the fate of the author's chief hero and his own 'Henri Barbusse' was a peaceful, modest, law abiding petty bourgeois a philistine, a man in the street, when he went to the war ²

Anatoly Lunacharsky remembers how impressed Lenin was with the novel *Fire* and says "Vladimir Ilyich read this book with genuine delight He told me what he thought of it several times and said that it was not just a remarkable manifesto against the war but a model of the kind of art we needed most in conditions of the imperialist war ³ Barbusse's protest against the horrors of the imperialist slaughter, deepened and logically grew into a protest against the capitalist system as such which engendered wars of conquest Later, as we all know, Henri Barbusse became one of the more outstanding revolutionary writers, a passionate champion of freedom and justice

His novels which truthfully described how a man arrived at revolution via war attracted Lenin's attention *Fire* and *Clarity* appealed to him so much because in them the main historical process of the age that is the growth of the masses revolutionary awareness in the trials of the imperialistic war was embodied in the stories of true-to-life characters The very course taken by history in the 20th century brought forward the theme of man's awakening his release from social and other prejudices This theme prevails in Barbusse's work as well In *Fire* Corporal Bertrand sheds his philistine view of life and attains a broad revolutionary understanding of the world and its events His social awakening compelled him to venture out of his familiar stagnant and stuffy little world, and revealed to him the conflicts of the great world of men That is why he makes such a passionate call for the revolutionary solidarity of nations, and that is also why his words about the responsibility borne by

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works* Vol 29 p 509

² Ibid p 518

³ A V Lunacharsky *Articles on Literature* Moscow, 1957 p 679 (in Russian)

every man for the future of the present and coming generations sound so convincing

The traits of philistine narrow mindedness are even more clearly brought out by Barbusse in the image of Simon Paulin the hero of his second anti war novel *Clarity*. The very title of the first chapter I shows up the narrowness of his world. For Simon Paulin an ordinary small employee of a factory in a French provincial town his poor, cowardly existence is entirely introverted. His monotonous vegetative existence in which one day is exactly like the next and his constant worry about managing on his meagre pay, made him a pitiful slave of routine. In his heart of hearts Paulin does not want anything to change in this routine he wants everything to remain as it is beginning from his morning walk to his office and ending with his hour of simple, pitiable leisure repeated regularly every day. In his narrow minded way he believes that since wars have always been there would always be wars. But the cruel, horrible trials of the imperialist war rips the veil of delusion from his eyes and reveals to him life's glaring contradictions. The true picture of the bourgeois society is made clear for him by stark reality and he begins to distinguish between right and wrong. The inexorable logic and experience of war finally give Paulin the moral strength to oppose the grandiloquent words extolling the valour of killing and justifying the inevitability of sacrificed lives.

"Can it be that the ones who died died in vain? Paulin is thinking his tormenting thoughts. Yes, if the world must remain as it is now.

And gradually this philistine and introvert develops into a responsible citizen and a revolutionary.

In analysing the novels of Henri Barbusse Lenin singled out the theme which in the years to come was to prevail in progressive modern literature the theme of revolution, and man acquiring vision in historical trials. It has been embodied in 20th century literature in a great variety of ways it is this theme that determines the social message in the books by the most prominent writers today.

This theme of man's social awakening and his new mentality acquired in the crucible of struggle was violently rejected by reactionary literature and given a completely distorted interpretation. In fact it is this struggle of opposite views on the changes wrought in men by the great

and complex upheavals and turning points of this age that is causing the division of forces in modern literature. When portraying man in conditions of tremendous historical trials, reactionary literature tries to show him as a helpless, self-interested or spiritually blind creature, always a defeated victim of circumstances, utterly estranged from the workings of history. Other modern writers, who take a sceptical attitude to capitalist reality, present their hero's life as a chain of disillusionments that compel him to withdraw from the unreasonable alien world and shut himself away in the isolated realm of his own self. Unlike these writers, modern revolutionary literature portrays man in difficult struggle; it truthfully shows the general development of the masses, the spiritual transformation of the hero, the broadening of his horizons, and his active participation in the making of history.

Lenin commented warmly on John Reed's book *Ten Days that Shook the World* in which the American journalist described the events of the Great October Revolution in Russia with profound understanding, splendidly conveying the meaning of this turning point in history. Lenin was deeply stirred by Reed's description of those recent fighting days and found the time to write a short but emotional foreword to the book. With all his heart he recommended it to workers in all countries and said he would like to see it circulated in millions of copies and translated into all the languages because it gave a truthful and remarkably well-written account of events that were so important for a real comprehension of the meaning of proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. These questions had been widely discussed, but before accepting or rejecting these ideas one had to make quite sure one understood the full significance of the decision one made. John Reed's book, Lenin went on to say, would undoubtedly help one to make up one's mind about this fundamental problem of the international labour movement.¹

This recommendation clearly illustrates Lenin's keenness on truthful, unprejudiced and emotionally coloured renderings of modern revolutionary happenings and processes.

¹ See V I Lenin, *Collected Works* Vol 36 p 519

Art, Lenin held, was not the popularisation of ready made truths in graphic form, but one of the fruitful varieties of human knowledge

All genuine art means a discovery of the new And one must fully subscribe to the opinion voiced by many of the speakers at the recent conferences and congresses of Soviet writers that one cannot produce a vivid, full blooded work if one fails to overcome the primitive point of view that art merely illustrates general, ready made, abstract truths and that artistic imagery is no more than the outward covering of the content

* * *

Any deviations from the truth of life evoked Lenin's stern condemnation He was intolerant of any attempts to pass off all kinds of speculative patterns for a realistic portrayal of life Disregard for the truth, intentional or not, always finds the writer out by rendering his work unconvincing schematic and trite, which is of course incompatible with genuine art There was a depth of meaning in the remark Lenin made to Clare Sheridan, a British sculptor, when she showed him some photographs of her statues, among them her Victory He said "That is the fault of bourgeois art it always beautifies"¹

Recalling how sensitive and intolerant Lenin was of everything that rang false in art, Nadezhda Krupskaya wrote

Two days before he died I read him one of Jack London's stories in the evening the book is still there, on the table in his room It was *Love of Life*—a very powerful thing A man, sick and dying of hunger, is making his way to the landing stage on a big river, across a desert of snow where no mortal has ever trodden His strength is draining away, but still he goes on, he crawls now, and beside him crawls a wolf who is also dying from hunger The man wins the struggle between them and reaches his destination half dead and half-crazed Ilyich liked this story extremely The next day he asked me to read the other stories in the book But with Jack London the powerful stories alternate with very weak ones The next story I began was of a completely different kind, it was steeped in bourgeois morals a captain

¹ Clare Sheridan, *Naked Truth* New York, 1928, p 190.

promises the owner of a ship loaded with grain to sell it at a good profit and he sacrifices his life just to keep this promise Ilyich laughed and dismissed it with a wave of his hand ¹

The classical formula of Russian revolutionary aesthetics that the beautiful is life was given new life and a Marxist development by Lenin In the light of this formula the source of the beautiful in the art of socialist realism is revealed with especial vividness This inexhaustible source is reality in its revolutionary development, and man the maker of this new reality

THE THEORY OF REFLECTION AND LITERATURE

The materialist theory of reflection makes the philosophical basis for Lenin's assertion that literature must be a cognitive and aesthetic influence The principles of progressive modern philosophy, aesthetics and the theory and practice of literature rest on this basis The originality of Lenin's views on literature will be made clear in the light of the theory of reflection the soul of the materialist theory of knowledge Lenin's thought about the reflection of the essential aspects of reality in really great works of art is an important theoretical tenet which explains what it means to correctly apply the theory of reflection to literature

Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* is a classical work of creative Marxism which provides a broad theoretical basis for elucidating the main problems of science, philosophy aesthetics literature and art The book came out more than sixty years ago, but in content it has not aged at all Lenin wrote it in connection with definite historical phenomena of that time yet it gives us the key to a number of problems in our spiritual life today

In order to fully appreciate the content of *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* one must remember the decisive processes in the development of society, science, philosophy and the arts at the close of the 19th century This work was a response given by progressive Marxist thought to the most

¹ V I Lenin on Literature and Art p 631 (in Russian)

burning problems of the time Its philosophico-aesthetic content discloses most comprehensively the whole system of Lenin's views on literature and the arts All questions of aesthetics, directly or indirectly raised in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* are centred on the same all penetrating theme of the interaction of art and reality

Mankind's ideological life has a great variety of trends and hues but Lenin emphasised that two main lines were clearly distinguishable in philosophy and social thought He wrote "Behind the mass of new terminological artifices, behind the clutter of erudite scholasticism we invariably discerned *two* principal alignments *two* fundamental trends in the solution of philosophical problems Whether nature, matter the physical the external world should be taken as primary, and consciousness, mind, sensation (experience as the *widespread* terminology of our time has it), the psychical, etc should be regarded as secondary that is the root question which *in fact* continues to divide the philosophers into *two great camps* The source of thousands upon thousands of errors and of the confusion reigning in this sphere is the fact that beneath the covering of terms, definitions, scholastic devices and verbal artifices, these *two* fundamental trends are *overlooked* ¹

At the beginning of this century the struggle between materialism and idealism and in the first place between the various kinds of empirio-criticism assumed a truly universal scale, embracing all the spheres of spiritual culture The approach to general questions of philosophy has always been of vital importance for the development of aesthetics, literature and art In his "Notes of a Publicist" written soon after the publication of *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* Lenin showed the broad general meaning of the Marxists' struggle against the Machists and said that it also embraced the sphere of art In *our* day a struggle between the Marxists and the Machists has come to the fore and is being waged in the domain of science philosophy and art ² Certainly artistic and aesthetic trends always have their historically unique and very often extremely complicated character Nevertheless here too, attempts have been made to present all sorts of anti materialist views and old resur

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works* Vol. 14 pp 335-36

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 16 p 206

rected idealistic rubbish under the guise of "new trends , new schools , 'new concepts and other new discoveries

The presentation of the main problems of aesthetics, above all else the relationship of art to reality, always depends on the character of the interpretation given to the questions of the theory of knowledge. In *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* Lenin again invites attention to the organic ties existing between aesthetic views and the theory of knowledge. He pointed to the ties between epistemology and aesthetics in his criticism of philosophers of the Mach, Avenarius and Petzoldt type and also the empirio-critics from the Social Democratic camp Bogdanov, Lunacharsky, and others.

Characterising Lunacharsky's aesthetic outlook during the period of his god building roamings, Lenin showed their closeness to the philosophy of empirio-criticism. One must be blind not to see the ideological affinity between Lunacharsky's deification of the higher human potentialities and Bogdanov's general substitution of the psychical for all physical nature. This is one and the same thought, in the one case it is expressed principally from the aesthetic standpoint and in the other from the epistemological standpoint.¹ The works on the history of end nineteenth-century literature show that the close interaction of literature, art and philosophy in that period had been far from fully studied and elucidated. The picture of that period's artistic life plainly shows that the complexity and elusiveness of the connection between philosophy and art should be neither lost sight of nor exaggerated. This connection becomes especially obvious when questions of world outlook and questions of philosophy are advanced to the forefront.

It would be anti historical to see a direct and immediate connection between definite philosophical systems and artistic trends everywhere but in the case of the decadent tendencies in literature during the period of reaction 1907-1910 the penchant for subjective idealism, the striving to find in it a philosophical support for their aesthetic views, and the emphasis on their spiritual kinship with empirio-criticism were common features. The very logic of idealistic views compelled the authors of *Essays on Marxist*

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works* Vol. 14 p 345

Philosophy who called themselves Marxists to bow to the decadents and seek a rapprochement with them

The general theoretical theses of *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* are bound up with Lenin's intolerance of decadence in philosophy and art. His struggle against all forms of decadence from aesthetic mysticism to Futurism was a natural continuation of his consistent policy of exposing the various types of subjective idealism in all spheres of art. It is quite logical therefore that his criticism of decadent literature appeared immediately after *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*.

The followers of Mach persisted in their attempts to construe an aesthetics based on the principles of empirio-criticism. One of the first was Wilhelm Ostwald, a very muddled philosopher as Lenin said of him, who as far back as 1904 declared the need for a direct application of Mach's teaching to aesthetics. R. Hamann, L. Riehl, J. Petzoldt, M. Klein and other champions of subjective idealism also tried to evolve Machist aesthetic systems.

Beginning with Dmitry Merezhkovsky's first programme work *On the Causes of Decline and on New Trends in Modern Russian Literature* the adherents to decadent trends openly declared their direct connection with Kant's philosophy and aesthetics and its reactionary Machist interpretation. Merezhkovsky stressed the direct, immediate correspondence of "artistic materialism", i.e. realism, to "scientific and moral materialism". By declaring that the "newest artistic trends were alien to materialism" this apostle of Russian decadence proclaimed their philosophical connection with Kantianism, and the desire and need to develop these trends further in the sphere of aesthetics and artistic creativity.

The principles of Kantianism interpreted one-sidedly in the spirit of Machism were insistently popularised in the articles of philosophers and critics published in the magazines *Vesy* (Scales), *Zolotoye Runo* (Golden Fleece) and other decadent publications. In his article *Criticism and Symbolism* Andrei Bely declared the successiveness of decadence to Kantian philosophy. By accepting together with Schopenhauer that part of *Critique of Pure Reason*, we place ourselves in an indissoluble connection with Kantianism. That is why for all our attacks against transcendental analysis, we symbolists consider ourselves via

Schopenhauer and Nietzsche the legitimate children of the great Königsberg philosopher. The mind whose supreme expression is dogmatism, is incapable of renouncing sensationalism overcoming it or uniting with it. All that is a task for the subsequent states of knowledge characterised by criticism and symbolism. It is most symptomatic that the symbolists adopted Kantianism via Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. As history has shown the decadent development of Kantian philosophy and aesthetics meant a maximum closeness to the subjective idealism of Berkeley, Mach and Avenarius. Even Kant's philosophy with its dualism did not quite suit the theoreticians of decadence who rejected its sensationalism which often approached materialism. What appealed to them in Kant's philosophy was his preaching of the disinterestedness of aesthetic perception, the estrangement of art from social and moral problems, and the incognisability of the external world. The decadent trends took Kantianism one-sidedly discarding its materialistic elements and assimilating only that which brought it close together with the philosophy of Berkeley, Schopenhauer, Mach and Avenarius. Other symbolist writers have developed the thought that the views of these philosophers were of decisive importance for decadent aesthetics.

Contrary to the notion then in vogue that empirio-criticism was an advance in philosophical thought, Lenin irrefutably proved the epigonic character of this much talked about school. Mach and Avenarius began with Kant but instead of going forward to materialism they went back in the opposite direction to Hume and Berkeley presenting subjectivism in a somewhat renovated verbal guise.

Lenin's criticism of the different varieties of neo-Kantianism, empirio-criticism and empirio-symbolism referring to many phenomena of aesthetics and literature in the period of reaction, has retained all its freshness and is applicable to the newest modernistic trends of our day.

Drawing a comparison between the philosophico-aesthetic foundations of today's modernistic trends and the idealistic schools which Lenin criticised more than half a century ago is not done arbitrarily. Far from it. Ferdinand Alquié the author of a rather well known book *Philosophie de surrealisme* drew a direct connection between surrealism and Berkeley's subjective idealism. It is generally known,

he wrote how Breton approved of the beauty of Berkeley's philosophy which rejects the existence of matter and is a philosophy of derealisation ¹

The concept of art as an expression of the artist's closed world as a certain combination of sensations is being intensively developed by reactionary aesthetics at the present time. The craving for isolation for renunciation of the outside world and the attempts to assert the notion that art is exclusively a product of the artist's subjective awareness were the main features common to all the earlier and modern decadent aesthetic theories from Hamann, Croce and Bergson to Dewey and Malraux.

Today's theoreticians of modernism make claim to novelty in their declarations but in actual fact the programme of rescuing art from the earthiness of the real world and liberating it from material existence", is very old and has long grown covered with mold.

Not so long ago we read among the views expressed by many bourgeois theoreticians the attacks of W. Philips against realism for being an art for the plebeians for the masses for those poor in spirit. Thousands of similar attacks have been made in recent years. Ortega y Gasset, a prominent representative of reactionary modern aesthetics says in his well known book *Dehumanisation of Art* that his view has already become widespread in certain academic circles as well. Is there anything new in this view? There is not. This is what Dmitry Merezhkovsky, the apostle of Russian decadence, wrote about the beginning of an unheard-of differentiation of art into art for the masses and art for the élite. Our time must be defined by two contrary features: it is the time of the most extreme materialism and simultaneously of the most passionate ideal impulses of the spirit. We are witnessing a great, important struggle between two views on life, two diametrically opposed world outlooks. So far the prevailing taste of the crowd is realistic. Artistic materialism conforms with scientific and moral materialism. The sordid aspect of negation, the absence of a higher ideal culture and the civilised barbarity in the midst of grandiose technical inventions: all this

¹ F. Alquié, *Revolte surréaliste et déréalisation* in *Cahiers du Sud* Paris, No. 327 1955 pp. 255-65.

has put a peculiar sort of stamp on the modern crowd's attitude to art ¹

Following his foreign colleagues Balmont declared way back in 1900 that realism was obsolete and that art had to be isolated from the objective reality from the live forms and colours of real life. In his article *Elementary Truths about Symbolic Poetry* he stated that Realists are always simple observers, while symbolists are always thinkers. Realists are in the grip of concrete life it washes over them like the surf and they see nothing behind it. Symbolists being estranged from reality see only their dream in it and they seem to be watching life from a window. This is so because every symbolist, however small is older than any realist, even the biggest. The one is still a slave to matter while the other has gone into the sphere of the ideal ²

Twenty years later this was repeated almost word for word by Ortega y Gasset when he gave a definition to the latest discovery of modern aesthetics. Nowadays this lame point of view is presented by hundreds of bourgeois literary scholars as the latest revelation of modern aesthetics.

In its philosophical premises the aesthetics of empirio-criticism is profoundly anti realistic, Lenin has proved. His *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* provides a key to the understanding of the theoretical grounds of that campaign against classical realism, against all morally healthy art which was launched at the beginning of the century and has attained unparalleled aggressiveness in our day. At the present time negation of the objective world and a striving to mystify the true picture of the world form the basis of reactionary modernistic aesthetics in its entirety. Richard Brinkmann in his book *Reality and Illusion* where he examines the development of realism formulates this general position of modernistic aesthetics of the present day as follows. The old realistic notion of life is falling apart. The relationships between subject and object which were typical for the works of the last century's writers and for the forms of their artistic representation, are ceasing to

¹ I. D. S. Merezkovsky *Collected Works* Vol. XV Moscow 1914 p. 245 (in Russian)

² K. D. Balmont *Gornye vershiny* (Mountain Peaks) Moscow, 1904, p. 76

be an effective or even a possible form of man's attitude to the world. Objects evade expression and words are incapable to grasp them. The images of the subconscious become symbols of reality in literature in the genuine meaning of the word. A poet portrays a singular subject in complete estrangement and loneliness which is sensed as all mankind's reality of existence.¹

The leaning for solipsism which is typical for decadent art, is leading many foreign writers to the most dissolute naturalism to a Freudian exposure of the anti-social and anti-moral sides of man's character and to a denial of spiritual activity.

It is in the attitude to this essential question—the relationship of art to reality and the artist's links with life—that the polarity of modern progressive and decadent art is most sharply revealed.

According to the champions of modernism the main task of art is to overcome the earthiness of the old art which was restricted to imitation of the material world. This and similar theories are not new at all. In his *Psychologie de l'art* André Malraux, the fashionable apostle of modernistic aesthetics, did not go so very far from Schopenhauer and Merezhkovsky who characterised art as one of the ways by which man can overcome the fettering objectivity of the surrounding world and free himself from the oppression of reality. This position now has its epistemological basis in all types of subjective idealism in the immanent school, in pragmatism, personalism, neo-positivism and other trends which in their essence merely reiterated the main theses of the schools criticised by Lenin.

The severance of links with the authentic aspects and general laws of reality has been proclaimed by decadent aesthetics to be the main sign of progress in art and of its liberation from the shackles of the material world. It is in modernism's illusory liberation of art from the shackles of reality that the theoreticians of bourgeois aesthetics see the innovation of modern decadent trends.

Lenin's criticism of neo-Kantianism and all other forms of subjective idealism given in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* is extremely valid for clarifying the true meaning

¹ Richard Brinkmann *Wirklichkeit und Illusion*, Tübingen 1957, S. 330

of those modern philosophical aesthetical and artistic phenomena which are counterposed to the materialist principles of art

Pragmatism and its aesthetics make a sort of variation to the philosophy of pure experiment. In the teaching of pragmatism, as different from materialism, the concept of practice loses its objective basis and is interpreted in a subjectivist spirit. John Dewey and the other exponents of pragmatism do not recognise the objective basis of art. The only source of art they hold is individual aesthetic experience which is supposed to bring order into the chaos of emotions and feelings. From this the pragmatists draw the conclusion that there are no objective general laws in art and that art is an expression of the self-contained individuality and the artists' subjectivity.

In the light of Marxist Leninist philosophical and aesthetic views it becomes perfectly evident how groundless are the modernists' claims to innovation and revolutionarism, and how bound up they are with the sadly dated subjective idealist schools, the empirio-critics Henri Bergson and his like.

Lenin suggested that before settling disputable questions and clarifying the direction in which this or that ideological trend was expanding, the course of its development should be investigated and its real essence elucidated. As is known, the exponents of modernism at first denied their withdrawal into the sphere of the abstract and their renunciation of content and meaning. These times are long past. The development of world art has now visually revealed the decisive essential importance of these traits in today's modernistic trends in which many processes emerging at the turn of the century, found their historical and logical culmination.

Lenin's theory of reflection exposes the insolvency of the fashionable modern notions of bourgeois aesthetics about the alogical discrete character of modern life and man's inability to grasp its general laws. The modern decadents' constant references to the supposed unknowability, discreteness and dissociation of life in the atomic age where all strong ties and general laws of development have allegedly disappeared, make one of the principal tenets of modernism. This world outlook claims to embody most fully the peculiarities of the intellect in the atomic age.

The fashionable incantations about the elusiveness and chaos of the real world pursue the aim of justifying and substantiating the rejection of visual representation in art and the flagrant destruction of artistic form under the guise of innovation and a struggle against clichés. This rejection of visual representation and the disintegration of form are passed off for an atomisation of art allegedly symbolising the dissolution of links in the modern world.

Is there really any connection, however slight, between the works and views of the modernists who have without any reason proclaimed themselves the apostles of the atomic age and the latest discoveries in the sphere of our knowledge of the structure of matter, and do they convey the peculiarities of the modern man's thinking and vision? No, there is nothing new or original in the modernists' views. Precisely the same claim was made at the beginning of this century by the Machists, the empirio-critics and the decadents who, failing to understand the real meaning of the latest scientific discoveries in the structure of matter, turned them into a source of social and historical horror stories and a theoretical basis for all kinds of philosophical and artistic disintegration. As remote from the truth is the opinion that in essence modernism means an attempt to transport modern scientific views and methods from the field of mathematics and natural science to the sphere of art.

One of the basic theses of modernism in our day is that the objective material world is chaotic and confused and that art brings order, meaning and clarity into it. Thus, as a counter balance to the incoherence and foolishness of the world we have the very expression of the artist's subjective complexes of notions which, unlike the reality they lend some sense to, are logical, balanced and inspired.

This thought about the lack of shape, coherence and logic in the objective world has been borrowed by modernistic aesthetics from the philosophy of subjective idealism. Practically all modernistic trends claim their due, each in its own way, for bringing order and reason into the chaotic and badly organised reality. This thought has long been developed by idealistic aesthetics. Schopenhauer held that the supreme mission of art was to bring harmony into the world. Modernistic aesthetics has taken firm hold of this thought and included it in its store of theoretical platforms. In his day it was stated by Apollinaire that without the

poets and artists the order we find in the world would disappear. After that the cubists, Futurists, Dadaists, surrealists and representatives of other modernistic trends proclaimed reality imaginary—and alien to art—and declared that the mission of the artist was to create his own world, quite unconnected with the objective world. Thus, the cubists proclaimed that the main task of art was to get the better of the surrounding world's poor organisation and create a new reality. The surrealists said that the purpose of art was to elevate man above the objective world and lead him into a higher reality, a super reality as the philosopher George Santayana calls it. The surrealists find that the way to attain this super reality is to free the personality of the writer and reader from the control of thought and reason and to let it immerse itself completely in the sphere of the subconscious.

The decadents' denial of the cognitive role of art is set forth in an organised consistent manner with the adducement of different arguments and proofs. It is in character with decadent aesthetics to tendentiously exaggerate the imaginary collision between portrayal and creativity. One of the most widespread arguments against the thesis that art is a specific form of cognising reality is to attempt and prove that the very principle of reflection is a passive, humble thing in comparison to the creative, efficacious power of art. Reflection is interpreted as something that merely repeats and copies what already exists, whereas art is ascribed the loftier function of creating what reality lacks of complementing and enriching it. Decadent aesthetics stands for the creation of absolutely new essences which are supposed to be completely independent by nature unrelated to any real existence. Hence such an emphatic opposition of the idea of creating an entirely new world and the idea of depicting real life and such stress on the rift between the cognitive and the aesthetic qualities of art. The striving to release art from the need to portray or express anything is the main feature of decadent aesthetics. The ideal is consequently an art that expresses nothing and severs all ties with the real life of men. And while in literature it is impossible to do without an outward theme and some elements of a plot, in painting the process of liberating art from subject or content is displayed most clearly. By renouncing portrayal and expression, modernist

art loses its function of exploring and cognising the world. The conflict itself between portrayal of the existing and creation of absolutely new, independent spiritual values that are unrelated to real life a conflict which is made much of by modernist aesthetics is not new at all being one of the century old aesthetic speculations aimed against the full reflection of life in art. Decadent aesthetics has aggravated this imaginary conflict to the extreme to the absurd which is all the novelty it has contributed to it. The assertion that the world is deceptive and unknowable the most widespread and one should say standing truth of modern reactionary aesthetics is used in the most different aspects. In view of this the manner in which problems of causality and necessity are approached is very important.

It is in character with realist art to strive to discover the interrelation between different facts to determine their place and significance in the stream of events and to separate the essential from the incidental the new from the old. Anti realist art in its various forms on the contrary destroys the natural links between phenomena and represents the world as a place of chaos where no general laws apply. Lenin categorically denied anyone the right to subjectively distort the picture of the external world or to attempt to justify arbitrariness in any fields of knowledge. As an example he indicated Karl Pearson who tried to prove the lawfulness of all kinds of decadent distortions of the true picture of life in the theory of knowledge and in art. Pearson said that The laws of science are products of the human mind rather than factors of the external world. Those whether poets or materialists, who do homage to nature as the sovereign of man, too often forget that the order and complexity they admire are at least as much a product of man's perceptive and reasoning faculties as are their own memories and thoughts.¹

The importance of the approach to the question of causality and necessity in the sphere of artistic creativity is dwelt on by Lenin in his polemic with Petzoldt. This author considered it impracticable to try and find some definite objective justification for the development of literary characters or their actions. In his opinion there was no room here for any simple uniformity of psychic phenomena since

¹ V I Lenin, *Collected Works* Vol 14 p 160

creative imagination is always individualistic and keeps producing exceptions all the time. If we examine the matter carefully we shall find that there is no such unique determination. There is not a single historical event or a single drama in which we could not imagine the participants acting differently under similar psychical conditions.¹

The interpretation of the categories of time and space has a direct connection with the problems of the further development of art with the approach to the artistic organisation of life's material with plot construction and motivation of character development. Interpreting time as a purely subjective concept brought into the outside world by the human mind makes one of the main arguments justifying the modern decadents' subjective arbitrariness in representing life's phenomena.

Denying the objectivity of time which is one way of dissociating art from reality is one of the principal ideas of modern reactionary literary criticism. Any attempts to relate literature to historically concrete aspects of real life in their consecutive connection evoke violent disapproval. The quintessence of this view on art as applicable to the interpretation of the category of time is given by Emil Steiger, a Swiss literary scholar in his book *Time as a Category of the Artist's Creative Imagination* (Zurich 1939-1959). According to Steiger, time as an objective historical category as an attribute of reality does not exist and wholly belongs to the sphere of subjective imagination. The main idea of the book can be formulated as a denial of the connection between art and objective, actual time. In application to the uniqueness of literature this irrational view serves as the main basis for the thesis about the absence of connection, consistency and solid motive in happenings and actions. The concepts of time and space are wholly relegated to the sphere of imagination and proclaimed a form of pure contemplation. At first glance it may seem that Steiger is simply repeating Kant who separated space and time from objective reality and interpreted them as attributes of pure forms of contemplation. It is unquestionable that to a certain extent Steiger does repeat Kant. But Kant's duality, his attempts to interpret the world objectively, his attachment to the natural sciences and his

¹ Ibid. p. 163

spirit of criticism are quite foreign to the exponents of modern aesthetic idealism. Following in the footsteps of Dilthey, Husserl and Bergson, they develop the point of view of extreme subjectivism and increasingly substitute experience for Kant's mathematical time. Following Heidegger, Emil Steiger defines history as a product of pure imagination. In art this primarily involves non-acceptance of realism and historicism.

The Conception of Time in Modern Art and Science by Arnold Hauser, a British literary scholar, is also a programme document. For all the merits of this article, Hauser defends in it the dual interpretation of the category of time and draws a connection between this view and the greatly dissimilar views of Bergson and Einstein's theory of relativity. Hauser says that Time in modern art and literature is an indifferent medium: it has no direction, no inevitability, no significance in itself; it receives its meaning from us. Its relativity seems to convey one message: life is like time itself: what you make of it.¹ According to Hauser, this understanding of time exposes the limitations and obsolescence of realistic consistency; deepens the notion of the world and reveals new possibilities of portraying it in art.

The memory of a place, Hauser goes on to say, means a certain period of our life and has no real existence apart from that period. The memory of a period of our life again can be so closely connected with a definite place, that such a place often has much more of temporal character than the mere dates or the number of days in which the events in question happened. The similarity of this spatial-temporal relativism to Einstein's theory is striking. Most of the forms of modern art, the visual arts as well as the novel, are under the spell of the idea of the relativity and the amalgamation of space and time.²

In literature, painting and the cinema, the influence of the subjectivist notion of time is observed in the penchant for discrete composition, deliberate disarrangement of time and place of action, and disorderly accumulation of different plot motifs. As asserted by Hauser and other champions of modernism, this attitude alone enables the artist to over-

¹ Arnold Hauser, "The Conception of Time in Modern Art and Science," *Partisan Review*, New York, Summer 1956, p. 333.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 329-30.

come the static impotence of realism in rendering the dynamic, discrete and expressive development of modern life

Hauser's argument against the materialistic platform of Lessing's aesthetics concerning the objective significance of time and temporal conditionality in works of art is symptomatic. This scientific view allows for a convincing portrayal of the movement and development of the sequence and interrelation of events, and for distinguishing between the more important phenomena and features. The modernists propose to substitute a chaos of sensations completely lacking in consistency, cohesion or inner logic, for genuine objective laws of life and art. Hence the absence of logic, the disconnectedness and the inner and outer incoherence of modernistic art.

Lenin's literary legacy has lost none of its potency as an efficient weapon in our present day struggle against the attempts of the anti-socialist ideologues to mystify the course of art's development and to restrict it to the narrow bounds of their biased patterns. Are not the discourses of some of today's modernist theoreticians on the sealed nature of artistic creativity reminiscent of those Machist concepts which Lenin criticised in his *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*? In the opinion of A. Bogdanov, any great work of art was a harmonious monistically idealised embodiment of that torrent of emotions which rushes confusedly and irrepressibly through the mind of the artist before the harmonising power of suffering has changed its form and direction in accordance with its laws.¹ Like today's modernist theoreticians, Bogdanov denied that reality was the source of art and maintained that artistic creativity was based on isolated subjectivist experiences and notions alone.

The hackneyed theses on the chaotic stream of subjectivist emotions are still voiced by the exponents of modernism today. They too divorce art from genuine objective laws of reality, wrongly limiting it to an inner, closed, subjective sphere.

One very important question which naturally, attracts our attention in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* is the question of struggle for materialist revolutionary traditions in philosophy, aesthetics and literature. Fortunately,

¹ A. Bogdanov *Empirio-monism* Book II St. Petersburg 1906, p. 97 (in Russian)

the main trends of advanced social thinking in Russia have a solid materialist tradition ¹ Lenin wrote He stressed the enormous importance of tradition in the history of social thinking and drew a distinct line between progressive materialist traditions and the reactionary traditions of idealism and mysticism Lenin qualified the consistency and irreconcilability of the struggle against any deviations from materialism and concessions to idealism and fideism in every and any of the recent trends , as the greatest and most precious tradition of Marxism ²

The question of philosophical and aesthetic traditions is extremely topical In recent years a whole series of books have been published abroad falsifying the history of Russian philosophy aesthetics and literature and trying to prove that idealist traditions prevailed in Russia while materialist traditions were groundless and undeveloped Berdyaev, Lossky, Zenkovsky Lezerson and others are anxious to show that traditions of mysticism and idealism predominated in the history of Russian social thought and literature Lossky writes In Russian philosophy the desire for an integral knowledge and an acute sense of reality are closely combined with a faith in all the diversity of experience sensory and also the more subtle which makes it possible to probe deeper into the structure of existence Russian philosophers trust intellectual intuition, moral and aesthetic experience which reveals before them the greatest values but first and foremost they trust mystical religious experience which establishes contact between man and God and His Kingdom In Russian history and aesthetics prominence is given to V Solovyov, S Frank, D Boldyrev, P Florensky N Berdyaev L Krasavin and A Losev At the same time persistent attempts are observed to involve even Belinsky, Herzen and Chernyshevsky in idealism and mysticism

Denying Russia her materialist revolutionary traditions takes the widespread form of presenting the struggle between the Slavophiles and the Westerners and not the struggle between the revolutionary democrats and the liberal landowners as the focal point in the life of Russian 19th century society Hans Kohn's *Basic History of Modern*

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works* Vol 33 pp 227 28

² *Ibid* Vol 14 p 339

Russia (New York, 1957) is an example. The author unites Belinsky, Herzen, Ogaryov, Botkin, Kavelin, Annenkov and Chernyshevsky as Westerners. An attitude like that leads to a dissolution of the revolutionary democratic materialist line of Russian social thought and literature in the diffused concept of Occidentalism.

Falsifiers of standing portray 19th century revolution ary democrats and materialists as idealists in order to create the impression that Communists have allegedly renounced the true traditions of Russian social thought. *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* and Lenin's other works show that Marxists are the very people who develop the finest traditions of their nation's science and culture with the most consistency. At the same time the militant spirit of *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* makes us remember that materialist traditions must be defended in principle and creatively developed on the basis of new experience in life and in art.

When pondering on the content of *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* it will be useful to recall Lenin's correspondence with Gorky during the writing and after the publication of this work, because it testifies to the importance Lenin attributed to a correct solution of the basic questions of world outlook for the entire spiritual life of the epoch. He kept Gorky informed about the Marxists' struggle against the Machists, patiently explained to him the meaning of the two opposing views, and helped him to overcome his god building delusions.

The correspondence between Lenin and Gorky of 1907-1910 which has a direct bearing on the writing of *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* and the range of problems it covers, gives guidance in correctly projecting the Marxist theory of knowledge scientifically, without simplifications and without stretching any points on questions of literature and art in accordance with their specific features and laws. The originality of Lenin's approach to problems of art is made especially clear in this correspondence. He did not believe in mechanically transferring the general principles of Marxist epistemology to the theory of art. And it is obvious from the views he voiced that he thought the sphere of art which re-creates all the sensorial wealth of life to be much more manifold than abstract philosophical notions.

Gorky was influenced in certain measure by Bogdanov's philosophy and aesthetics which can be seen from his short story *Confession*, his *History of Russian Literature* and some of his articles. For instance in *History of Russian Literature* Gorky repeated Bogdanov's tenet on organised experience and economy of thinking. Proceeding from this he even more or less shared Bogdanov's view on the general and the individual in the character of an artist. The wider the experience the less room there is for the subjective, the personal, the more irrepressibly prominent becomes the general and the more vivid the social aspect of the artist, Gorky wrote. The more resolutely a writer renounces his personality, the easier he sheds his pettiness and smallness, and the broader and more profound becomes his perception of the significant and the objective in the surrounding world.¹ Lenin remarked more than once that Gorky's god building delusions were reflected in his *Confession* and his article *More About Karamazovism*. Still he always stressed that these serious mistakes did not determine the general character of Gorky's writing and that he remained a great revolutionary writer, a most prominent representative of proletarian art.

Gorky's subsequent work confirmed Lenin's far sightedness and proved that the scholastic fancies of Bogdanov and other god building Machists were really alien to his nature. It was highly symptomatic that at the First All Union Congress of Soviet Writers Gorky spoke of the historical significance of *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* and Lenin's profound examination of the essential problems in the spiritual life of the modern man. All Gorky's work by its very spirit convincingly confirms the fruitfulness of Lenin's theory of knowledge and asserts the strengthening of links with life as the theoretical basis of socialist realism.

His enormous life experience and his complex critical seekings helped Gorky to correctly assess all the fashionable Machist trends as a sign of the bourgeoisie's spiritual impoverishment. Speaking at the First All Union Congress of Soviet Writers Gorky called *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* a militant book against idealism and said:

¹ M. Gorky, *History of Russian Literature* Moscow 1939 p. 4 (in Russian)

"Throughout the 19th century the bourgeoisie which was more or less apprehensively aware of the lawlessness and insecurity of its power over the working masses tried to justify its existence with the philosophy of criticism, positivism rationalism, pragmatism, and other attempts to distort the purely materialist thought stemming from work processes. One after another these attempts proved incapable of explaining the world, and at the commencement of the 20th century it was once again declared that the leader of philosophical thought was the idealist Bergson whose teaching incidentally was pleasing to the Catholic religion. If we add to this frank admission of the need to go backwards the bourgeoisie's present day wails about the ruinous implications of irrepressible technical development and the fabulous wealth it was creating for the capitalists we shall gain a very clear idea of the level of the bourgeoisie's intellectual impoverishment. Refusal to recognise the basic meaning of life's phenomena that is, escape from reality for fear of it or because of a selfish desire for tranquility and because of social indifference is always the cause of intellectual impoverishment.¹ This statement clearly reveals the meaning of every form of Machism in the history of society, and the significance of Lenin's struggle for the fundamentals of materialism, for enrichment of the people's spiritual life.

The thoughts expressed in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* do not simply refer to past history, but are projected into the future. The development of Soviet art and literature is bound up with the materialist ideas set out in this work which make the theoretical basis of the aesthetics of Soviet literature and form its guiding principles: truthfulness, partisanship, and close contact with reality.

HUMANISED NATURE

Realism presupposes that life's truth and the artist's point of view are two inseparable things. Art as portrayal, versus art, as creativity, makes the subject of heated discussions today.

Anti-realist movements regard as the criterion of truth

¹ M. Gorky *Collected Works* Vol 27, p 302 (in Russian)

only the extent to which the content of a work corresponds to the thoughts notions and convictions of its author. The exponents of these movements advance different variants of the subjective image of a subjective world formula to define the nature of art. Materialist aesthetics stipulates as an essential condition of truthfulness that the content of a work of art should correspond to the objective meaning of objects happenings and characters.

Lenin always underlined the connection of art for all its specific figurativeness, with the general process of human knowledge and the dependence of aesthetic problems on epistemology. Views which in one way or another put art outside the sphere of human knowledge are foreign to the very spirit of Lenin's philosophico-aesthetic theory.

In evaluating works of art Lenin's chief criterion was their conformity to the essence and logic of life in the sum of its objective and subjective aspects. Those who understand art subjectivistically lose sight of its vital content and the fact that an artist must reckon with the peculiarities of the object he is representing. An artistic embodiment of reality presupposes a variety of interpretations conditioned by the peculiarities of the writer's individuality. But whatever his style or manner he cannot ignore the distinctive features and the essence of the object represented.

It follows from Lenin's theory of reflection that when evaluating works of art it is imperative in the first place to see how they relate to genuine reality. Conformity with life is the best way of judging how truthful and valuable is a work of art. An objective and reliable criterion such as this also helps to bring out the writer's individual qualities to the best advantage.

However a different point of view was also very widespread in the history of literature. Its exponents held that in assessing a book priority had to be given to the conception of the author rather than the truth of life. Concessions to this limited principle of evaluation were observed even in the works of such a prominent Marxist art theoretician as G. V. Plekhanov. The erroneousness of his criticism of some of Maxim Gorky's writings was largely due to his interpretation of the conformity of form to content and execution to conception, as the chief criterion of artistry.

Needless to say when making a critical examination of a book it is imperative to probe deeply into the author's

conception and his attitude to life. Otherwise there can be no hope of correctly interpreting a literary work which is always stamped with the individuality of the author and his own vision of the world. But all this is just one side of the question, essential though it is.

The history of literature has irrefutably proved that the conception of a writer can be correct or mistaken, broad or narrow, happy or not happy, acceptable or unacceptable. One of the essential requirements in critical analysis is to determine the truthfulness and significance of the writer's conception as such. Lenin criticised those theoreticians who judged of ideological phenomena by comparing them to the pre-set positions and conceptions, and not to the pertinent objective aspects of life. Lenin said that if the conscious element plays a subordinate role in the history of culture, it is obvious that criticism, whose object is this culture, can at least of all draw its conclusions from some form or some result of consciousness. In other words, its starting point can by no means be an idea, but only an external, objective influence. What criticism has to do is compare the given fact not to an idea but to another fact; the only important thing is for the two facts to be analysed as thoroughly as possible and presented in relation to one another at different moments of development, and also, and this is especially important, for as thorough an analysis to be made of the whole sequel of the known states, and the succession and connection between the different stages of development.

There are many examples in the history of literature where the writer's conception was false, contradicting the truth of life. Belinsky, Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov did a great deal to demonstrate the delusiveness of the conceptions of Slavophile writers, of the apologists of serfdom, and of the champions of Christian religious illusions. Lenin gave a convincing definition to the groundlessness of the decadents and the Narodniks' conceptions.

Research into the basic processes in modern literature shows that the sum of historical and theoretical questions and all the lines of argument are centred round the all-embracing problem of art and knowledge.

On the one hand, we see that the anti-realist movements and theories which repudiate the concept of art as one of the forms of human knowledge and refuse to acknowledge the connection of aesthetics with epistemology, are becoming

very active. On the other, we observe a tendency to simplify the interpretation of art as a form of knowledge. A fuller elucidation of the interaction of the objective and the subjective in art is therefore called for.

One of the essential tasks of the theory of art is to overcome the relapses into one-sided simplified materialism which draws a crude dividing line between the objective and the subjective aspects of human being. This separation is echoed most painfully in the theory of art which always deals with the inner world of man with the sphere where all the phenomena of reality are re-created through the prism of the author's and his heroes' inner vision. Lenin objected to any sort of separation of these two inseparable aspects of human being. He said that an absolute counterposing of the material to the spiritual was justified only within the framework of the theory of knowledge—a thought of extreme importance for the theory of literature. His struggle against simplified notions on the correlation between the historico-economic and the spiritual, objective and subjective principles is as topical today helping us to gain a clearer idea of the complexity of the processes taking place in modern art.

At the present time various ways of divorcing the objective from the subjective and the material from the spiritual are practised. One of them is the constant tendency of modernist trends to represent the relations between social objectivity and individuality as an everlasting irreconcilable and painful conflict which constitutes one of the innermost and essential processes in art. As a rule the changeability and inconstancy of history, or objective reality is stubbornly counterposed to higher, eternal spiritual values, comprising the sole object of artistic creativity.

All the theories of de-realisation, de-materialisation, in intellectualism and irrationalism which, for all their dissimilarities, are allegedly projected into the inner spiritual essence of man, are based on an aggravation of this conflict.

On the other hand, no less urgent is the task to overcome the vulgar-sociological and any other primitive interpretations of the objective and the subjective in art, and the underestimation of the spiritual content of reality. Vulgarisation of the fundamental principle of literature's links with life begins when an author has an inaccurate, schematically

one track idea of reality. This principle is frequently misinterpreted as relating to the visible, external aspect of phenomena whereas its meaning is much broader implying a penetration into the depths of human personality and into the spiritual processes and problems of the epoch.

Such an unwarranted separation of the subjective from the objective and of the inner laws of artistic creativity from its real life-like content, only seems convincing at first glance. Actually it comes from an extremely narrow, impoverished interpretation of all these concepts. There is no conflict between the content of art and its general inner laws which are implemented in the manner in which events man, his external and inner world are embodied. But the most essential point is that the concept of reality from positions of the materialist theory of reflection can by no means be reduced to the visible material world. This concept includes all the aspects of human being all its objective and subjective meaning.

This is what Chernyshevsky said about the concept of reality. By real life we do not mean of course simply the relation of man to the objects and creatures of the objective world, but his inner life as well. Sometimes a man lives by his dreams. His dreams then acquire the meaning of something objective for him (to a certain extent and for a certain length of time) even more often a man lives in the world of his emotions. These states of mind, if they become interesting are also rendered in art.¹

A broad and exact understanding of the concept of reality includes all the aspects of the spiritual intellectual and emotional world which is closest to art. And this makes a solid basis for a correct assessment of a work of literature dealing with the sphere of man's nature, emotions and reflections.

It is symptomatic that many of the arguments and misunderstandings about the nature of art and realism stem from various circumscribed interpretations of the concept of "reality" and consequently of the cognitive essence of literature and its links with life. Therefore, placing the subjective intellectual and emotional sphere outside the bounds of realism is unwarranted. It is, in fact, the acti

¹ N. G. Chernyshevsky *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, Moscow, 1949 p. 85 (in Russian)

vation of the subjective, the spiritual, and its role in historical creativity that makes a typical attribute to the image of modern reality

The effectiveness of re-creating life in art is underscored in Lenin's philosophical judgements. This dialectical understanding of the nature of creativity shows up the impotence of wingless illustration, mechanical copying of life, and other like forms. Lenin categorically rejected a vulgar identification of social consciousness with social being. In his summary of L. Feuerbach's book *Lectures on the Essence of Religion* Lenin wrote "Art does not require the recognition of its works as reality."¹ And "Social consciousness reflects social being—that is Marx's teaching. A reflection may be an approximately true copy of the reflected—but to speak of identity is absurd."²

Here Lenin stresses the active character of the interaction of life and art. Seen thus, artistic creativity appears to be a process of graphical cognition of reality, based on the oneness of subject with the object of the artist with reality. It is impossible to reflect life in art without expressing the artist's individuality; in artistic knowledge the reflection of the object is dialectically intertwined with the expression of the artist's personality. That is why among the books written on the same theme and based on the same material some will turn out to be rich in content, and others—poor and mediocre. Writers reflect the same material from different positions, with a different depth and fullness.

The essence of art as an actively transformed, humanised world or nature, sublimated by the author's thought and feeling, was correctly defined by L. Feuerbach in the following words which Lenin approvingly quoted. Of course the products of fantasy are also products of nature, for the force of fantasy, like all other human forces is in the last analysis (*zuleiszt*) both in its basis and in its origin, a force of nature; nevertheless nature in the head and heart of man is distinct from nature outside the human head and heart.³ This interdependence of knowledge and transformative human activity gives the theoretical key to the discovery of accurate definitions, so urgently needed for

¹ V. I. Lenin *Collected Works* Vol. 38 p. 73

² *Ibid.* Vol. 14 p. 323

³ *Ibid.* pp. 118-19

present day literary research for the correlation of the concepts portrayal and creativity

All life's phenomena enter the sphere of art after they had been digested intellectually and emotionally and humanised in the broadest meaning of the word, which presupposes a combination of their social and individual properties. In classical aesthetics the inspiring essence of art is figuratively and accurately defined as second nature born of artistic creativity. It was Goethe who introduced the term. He wrote: "From all that nature offers us we select for ourselves but a meagre quantity of that which is desirable, which can give delight, that which the artist brings man must be completely understandable and pleasing to the senses, all of it must excite and appeal, all of it must give delight and peace of mind, all of it must be food for the spirit, all of it must enlighten and elevate, and the artist grateful to nature which has produced himself offers it in return a sort of second nature born of feeling and thought, a nature that is humanly completed."¹ And Gorky further stressed that "Art, like science creates a second nature, with the difference that science solicitously surrounds man with this second nature on the outside, while art creates it inside us."

In literature we encounter different, and often contradictory interpretations of the meaning of the second nature created by an artist. Lenin and Gorky held that the creative function of literature was to discover the new, to explore life intellectually and emotionally, to affirm or deny. The champions of fashionable universal views today adapt the concept of "reality to suit their "myths" of a general vagueness and formlessness, where the meaning of phenomena is mystified and the world is perceived as chaos.

Defining art as humanly completed, transformed nature born of thought and feeling, brings out with perfect clarity the innermost meaning of the principle of cognising the world according to the laws of beauty.

In the aesthetics of Lenin and Gorky, the concept of humanised, second nature created by the artist, finds a materialist explanation which discloses the real sources and purpose of art.

Every big writer has his own range of interests involving

¹ Goethe *Sämtliche Werke* Bd 32-36 Leipzig S 100-01

different aspects of life which he reflects in his works as dictated by his individual perception of life, his aptitudes, views and temperament. This is an organic, undisputed need and right, and a writer cannot become really great unless he possesses this private world of imaginative vision.

A NEW TYPE OF REALISM

From Lenin's views on literature we draw a clearly shaped concept of a new aesthetic ideal, of the general features and theoretical principles of a new type of realism which would truthfully portray life in motion, in perspective, in its revolutionary development. This realism makes the basis of the most progressive art today.

Lenin's ideas are a weapon against all types of pseudo-realism, feeble illustrativeness and naturalism. Petty bourgeois, cheap realism created a serious obstacle to the socialist development of revolutionary art. Lenin flatly rejected pseudo-realism whatever the guise it chose to put on. In the "sober-minded" arguments of the adherents to what he called creeping pettifogging realism, he saw their craving to adapt themselves to the bourgeois landlordist order, and such pseudo-realism Lenin always exposed both in politics and in literature.

It will be most useful to recall that Lenin raised the question of realism in connection with the growing revolutionary awareness of the working people described by Gorky in his novel *Mother*. Lenin's remark made to Gorky at the Fifth Congress of the Social Democratic Party characterises the special features of socialist art. "*Mother* is a much needed book," he said. "Many of the workers took part in the revolutionary movement unconsciously, spontaneously, and now they will read *Mother* and draw many useful conclusions for themselves."¹ Lenin noted the novel approach in Gorky's classic which reflected the historical merging of progressive socialist theory with the mass workers' movement, or in other words, the most significant development in the self-liberating movement of mankind in that new epoch of the masses awakening awareness. Lenin's praise of *Mother* confirms that he and Gorky took the same view of the ideologi-

¹ M. Gorky, *Collected Works*, Vol. 17, p. 7 (in Russian).

cal and artistic problems of literature In *Mother* Gorky gave world literature a new hero a conscious proletarian revolutionary

It was this revolutionary interpretation of realism that immediately became the object of the Mensheviks' and the decadents' attacks After the failure of the 1905 revolution, the Mensheviks tried to discredit Lenin by showing him up for a day-dreamer and themselves posing as the champions of sober realism In his report on the attitude to bourgeois parties presented to the Party congress held in London Lenin exposed the real substance of the Mensheviks' "sober realism behind which lay their desire to adapt themselves to bourgeois reality "In their resolution Lenin said "the Mensheviks speak of the 'realism of the urban bourgeois classes Strange terminology this which betrays them against their will We are accustomed to seeing a special meaning attached to the word realism among the Right wing Social Democrats For instance Plekhanov's *Sovremennaya Zhizn* contrasted the realism' of the Right Social Democrats with the 'revolutionary romanticism of the Left Social Democrats What then does the Menshevik resolution have in view when it speaks of realism? It appears that the resolution praises the bourgeoisie for its moderation and punctiliousness!

"These arguments of the Mensheviks about the 'realism' of the bourgeoisie about its 'unpreparedness to fight taken in conjunction with the open declaration of their tactical platform on the one-sided hostility of the Social Democrats towards the liberals speak of one thing and one thing only In point of fact, it all means that the independent policy of the workers party is replaced by a policy of dependence on the liberal bourgeoisie" ¹

The different interpretations of "realism", formulated here so precisely by Lenin were manifested in the different evaluations of Gorky's *Mother* Plekhanov said that in this book Gorky undertook to be a "preacher of Marx's views but as evidenced by the book itself Gorky was quite unsuited for the role of a preacher of these views because he did not understand Marx's views at all ² Whereas Plekhanov

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works* Vol. 12 pp 463-64.

² G V Plekhanov *Literature and Aesthetics* Vol. 1 Moscow 1958, p 132 (in Russian)

viewed *Mother* as a "revolutionary alchemy", Lenin on the contrary approved of the story's revolutionary optimism and its historical perspective thus showing the closeness of his idea of realism to Gorky's creative principles. Gorky's thesis was that it was most important for a writer to be able to find that which is of general significance in life, typical not for the given day alone", in other words to be able to see in perspective the country's revolutionary development and the future of the awakening people. The task of the moment is to fan the sparks of the new into brilliant lights.¹

Gorky's creative method was stimulated by the rapidly changing world by the urge for freedom and by his conviction that life should be portrayed not statically but dynamically not just in its movement from the past to the present but also in perspective.

Lenin demanded of the writers that they should show the shoots of the new in life. In his article "The Great Beginning" published in the first years of Soviet power he wrote that it was imperative to portray life in its advance to socialism, to encourage the shoots of the new and support the conviction that they would triumph over the old. He appealed to people to lovingly foster those "simple modest ordinary but viable shoots of genuine communism which if tended with care would not wither but would on the contrary, "grow and blossom into complete communism."²

This is what Mayakovsky said about the realism of Soviet art

*"We're realists too
But not ruminant cattle
sticking in domesticity
We're all in the future,
all in battle
for communism,
brilliant with electricity"*³

The faith in the transforming power of genuine realism is expressed by the poet in his figurative energetic manner "Real poetry must always get ahead of life if only by an

¹ M. Gorky *Collected Works* Vol 29 Moscow 1955 pp 101-102 (in Russian)

² V. I. Lenin *Collected Works* Vol 29 p 428-431

³ V. Mayakovsky *Collected Works* Vol 7 Moscow 1958 p 209 (in Russian)

hour " he said "The feeble mark time waiting for the happenings to be over before describing them while the strong get as far ahead of time as they can in order to give it a leg up"¹

The prospects for progressive literature and its investigation of the development of mankind are clearly outlined in Lenin's statements. The significance of the images created by the classics largely depends on the keenness of their artistic vision and the perspicacity with which they observe the growth of the new motive social forces in their contemporary life. When Lenin speaks of the Russian classical writers and especially of Belinsky, Herzen, Chernyshevsky, Pisarev, Lev Tolstoi and Gorky, he makes it obvious that sensitivity to the tendencies of the future is an essential quality for a progressive talent to have.

The polemic concerning the typisation of history's new young forces has not cooled off with the years but has on the contrary grown ever sharper. A fact of significance is that it was Belinsky, the initiator of revolutionary democratic criticism, who spoke of the two types of realism in world literature: the one that stopped at contemplating the present and the other that strove to see into the future and bring it closer.

Lenin thought Chernyshevsky's keenness of vision an extraordinary gift. Of interest is the remark he made on the two main types of agrarian development in Russia: "It was the very point of view defended by *Otechestvenniye Zapiski* and *Souremennik* (!). He did right to stand for the idea: life has proved the justice of that idea."²

The realistic depth of Lev Tolstoi's novels delighted Lenin. The present as depicted by Tolstoi contained elements of the future, not finally crystallised but already engaged in struggle against the old and the obsolete. Lenin spoke harshly of the non-resistance prejudices in Tolstoi's philosophy but in his articles he gave prominence to the truthfulness and power with which Tolstoi showed the breaking up of the old and the birth of the new and depicted "that which has not become a thing of the past but belongs to the future."³ Lenin quoted Tolstoi as saying "A writer must

¹ Ibid. Vol. 12 p. 122

² *Lenin Miscellany XIX* p. 157 (in Russian)

³ V. I. Lenin *Collected Works* Vol. 16 p. 327

know that which is common to the whole of mankind but is yet unknown to mankind "

World literature has produced striking works reflecting in their own, original way the different real and often conflicting tendencies in the development of society's political and spiritual life. But progressive aesthetics does not stop at this, and a long struggle has been waged for the author's right to typify the emerging and growing forces of history. The most impressive chapters in this struggle are connected with the names of the Russian critics Belinsky, Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov, and also Gorky who established the new revolutionary hero, and realism projected into the future. In view of this a concretely historical solution had to be found to the problem of relationship between the new type of realism and the preceding types.

Some of the outstanding realist writers of the past drew the material for their typical images and for their artistic generalisations only from widespread acknowledged phenomena or to use Goncharov's expression "from settled life". They insisted that a type became a type only after it had recurred many times and had become familiar to everybody. From this it obviously followed that emerging forces of history could not be an object of artistic generalisation.

A different view was championed by the precursors of the method of socialist realism—those revolutionary democratic writers who saw the realisation of their ideal not in the past but in the future. They held that one of the writer's main tasks was to disclose the new forces of history, as yet unformed though they be. Belinsky and Chernyshevsky defined the basic principles of the art of the future with genius realism which combined the truthfulness of portrayal with an assertion of history's new forces.

With amazing perspicacity Dobrolyubov formulated the rule of poetically portraying the life of the people which was first implemented in the works of Gorky and only after that in the writings of other revolutionary authors. What Dobrolyubov said was this: "In order to be able to portray life poetically even if in the tone of a satire one must cultivate in one's heart a firm conviction that finding a way out of the present order of things is both necessary and possible. Only then we shall be able to separate the normal, human and lawful in these phenomena from the artificial, accidental

and forcibly imposed, and only after that we can take up the pen with an easy mind and sincere feeling and render these phenomena in poetic images ¹

Towards the end of the last century the question of the further development of art became more critical still. New social forces made a strong bid for recognition. But these forces did not find their full embodiment in literature, with a few rare exceptions, not in the epigonic populist books which still bewailed the fate of the peasant community, corroded by the canker of proletarianisation, nor in the works of the last great realist writers of the past. The authors themselves began to feel the limitations of critical realism and the need to complement a truthful portrayal of the present with a glance into the future. Let us quote Saltykov-Shchedrin who confidently voiced the opinion that an artist could not help wanting to see into the future when analysing the present. He said: "When describing some fact a realist writer has no right to either ignore its past or refuse to investigate its future destiny (by guesswork, perhaps, but the desire will nevertheless be perfectly natural and imperative), because this future, though unseen to the naked eye, is as perfectly *real* as the present" ². Later, both Korolenko and Chekhov wrote along the same lines. However, they could not embody their dream about the art of the future in all its fullness, because much of this future remained mere guesswork for them.

It was Lenin who indicated how this very difficult problem could be solved. As long ago as 1894 he suggested a different approach to one of the most important themes of Russian literature: that of the tragic plight of the peasantry. He wrote: "All this was described, studied and explained with such a wealth of material, in such minute detail, that if ours were not a class state it should, of course, have been convinced a thousand times over of the need for eliminating these hardships" ³.

Lenin's following words must be kept in mind for a better understanding of this new quality of socialist realist literature: "Even before Engels, many people had described the

¹ N. A. Dobrolyubov, *Collected Works* Vol. II, Moscow, 1935, p. 578 (in Russian).

² N. Shchedrin (M. Y. Saltykov) *Collected Works* Vol. V Moscow, 1937, p. 174 (in Russian).

³ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 276.

sufferings of the proletariat and had pointed to the necessity of helping it. Engels was the *first* to say that the proletariat is *not only* a suffering class that it is, in fact, the disgraceful economic condition of the proletariat that drives it irresistibly forward and compels it to fight for its ultimate emancipation. And the fighting proletariat *will help itself*. The political movement of the working class will inevitably lead the workers to realise that their only salvation lies in socialism. On the other hand, socialism will become a force only when it becomes the aim of the *political* struggle of the working class.¹

Lenin insisted that just criticism, however devastating of the principles of the old society was not enough, merely describing the distressing plight of the people in exploiter society was insufficient. It was imperative to spread the ideas of socialist revolution among the people and promote a radical change in the existing socio-economic relations. There was a need for scientific socialist ideals that would lead people forward and show them the way out of their vicious circle of troubles. On the basis of an analysis of the objective laws governing the development of society, Lenin showed how the socialist ideal could be made reality. He distinguished the new social forces in old, tsarist Russia, and indicated the road leading to deliverance from the old.

In the light of what Lenin said, the insufficiency of critical realism, which at the new stage of society's development strongly condemns the old society but does not show how life can really be changed, becomes especially evident.

The ideas of Marxism Leninism and the maturing of socialist revolution provided a solid basis for the creation of a new, revolutionary art that would reflect the process of embodying the socialist ideal in life. This makes one of the main features in Gorky's innovation, and in Soviet art as a whole.

Genuinely progressive art portrays all the aspects of life—the positive as well as the negative—in all their complexity and interrelation. The more promising the developments of present day life, the clearer is the writer's vision of the future. Lenin always urged politicians and writers to support progressive phenomena in the life of the people, because here the moribund and the nascent are intricately

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works* Vol. 2 pp 22-23.

interwoven, and the writer who discloses in artistic images the direction in which life is developing will be doing mankind a great service

One observes that on this score Lenin and Gorky thought remarkably alike. Gorky saw that the future belonged to socialism when the movement was only just emerging in Russia. And his realism, which carries the romance of revolution and the drama of struggle, made a new step forward in the development of Russian literature.

Working on the main problems of socialist realism, Gorky said in his speech at the plenary session of the Union of Soviet Writers on March 7, 1935: "Reality eludes the eye. And, after all, it is imperative for us to know not just the two realities—the past and the present—in whose making we take a certain part. We have also got to know a third reality—the reality of the future. We must somehow include this third reality in our usage now; we must portray it. Unless we do so we shall not be able to understand what the method of socialist realism really means."¹

Lenin's idea that traits of the present, past and future are there in every developing phenomenon provides a scientific materialist basis for cognising reality in motion. The problem of these three temporal dimensions of life in development or, to use Gorky's expression, these "three realities", and the way it is tackled in literature makes it easier to appreciate the nature of genuinely progressive art which shows phenomena in their concrete historical meaning, explains their origin and indicates prospects of their further development.

The keenness of the classics' artistic vision enabled them to see deep into the meaning of the historical processes that were taking place, to impressively represent the trends of society's development, and to discern the seeds of the future in their contemporary life. "There is something new in the old which it is necessary to take into consideration and make use of,"² Lenin said. Features which to many seem no more than tendencies or just single instances acquire in progressive art the significance of a prototype of things to come. There is nothing contrived in the idea of rendering

¹ M. Gorky *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 419.

² V. I. Lenin *Collected Works*, Vol. 17, p. 388.

this third reality in art which is, on the contrary, a logical development of life's real elements

Socialist literature militantly supports the new, progressive forces of history. The logic of life itself compels every sensitive writer to try and cognise what is coming in and what is going out, and also the relationship between and typical features of the new and the old.

Lenin rejected the view that realism was one-dimensional and naive. The term naive realism is also frequently used by the idealists as an argument against materialism. The decadents in philosophy and aesthetics developed their theories in a striving to overcome what they called the limitations of materialism which, they alleged, took no account of the complexity of life and consciousness and was, in essence, rather a naive realism. Accusing realism of depicting life in a one-dimensional, simplified manner, inadequate for rendering the complex perceptions of the modern man, was the chief argument used by decadents past and present. Lenin convincingly exposed the real meaning of these widespread accusations, and the striving to substitute a complex of sensations, an expression of man's subjective feelings alone, for realism. He wrote: "The naive realism of any healthy person who has not been an inmate of a lunatic asylum or a pupil of the idealist philosophers consists in the view that things, the environment, the world, exist *independently* of our sensations, of our consciousness, of our *self* and of man in general. Our sensation, our consciousness is only *an image* of the external world, and it is obvious that an image cannot exist without the thing imaged, and that the latter exists independently of that which images it. Materialism *deliberately* makes the naive belief of mankind the foundation of its theory of knowledge."¹

As we all know, in our day, too, attempts are being made to overcome the limitations of materialism and realism and substitute for the latter a complex of sensations. Using the example of revisionist writers many of whom considered themselves Marxists, Lenin conclusively proved that this overcoming of materialism and realism was, actually, a surrender to idealism and decadence. The breadth of Lenin's theoretical generalisations is evidenced by his analysis of subjectivist pseudo-realism, various forms of which are

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 14, pp. 69-70.

cultivated in our day by modernistic literature and aesthetics. In literature one encounters many types of camouflage where things are passed off for realism while being entirely foreign to it. Lenin noted especially the numerous falsifications of realism and its mishandling by positivists.

What Lenin had in mind in the first place were the philosophical interpretations of the concept of realism. But his general judgements on this question have a direct bearing on the understanding of the nature of realism.

In analysing the writings of the empirio-critics Lenin gave warning against their persuasions that their perception of the world as a complex of sensations confirmed the reality¹ of their views.

The Machists declared that they were speaking from experience from the authentic evidence of their senses, meaning by experience the sum of their inner, subjective emotions.

The tendency to substitute sensations for reality is typical for modern authors as well. The fallacy of all forms of pseudo-realism lies precisely in its attitude that the world evaporates or becomes transformed into an illusion.¹ Even some of the representatives of the immanent school, of Machism and other idealist movements called themselves realists. They declared that there was no reason to repudiate the starting point of naive realism. Lenin explained the peculiarity of their perception of realism, and wrote: "One must be extremely naive not to discern pure subjective idealism in such realism! Just think the external world belongs to consciousness and is in *absolute* connection with it!"² Pseudo-realism as obscure as this inevitably isolates the artist from the wealth of life and takes him into the sphere of illusions.

The modern history of literature, art and philosophy contains many instances where the decadents come out under the flag of realism. Very often they do this in their erroneous faith in the vitality of their modernist programme which they believe to be the highest embodiment of truth. In other instances we encounter attempts to camouflage the subjectively idealistic essence of their views and to adapt themselves to the new conditions of the ideological struggle. It is a notable fact that one of the most widespread decadent move-

¹ V. I. Lenin *Collected Works* Vol. 14, p. 56.

² *Ibid.*, p. 215.

ments called itself surrealism. It has nothing to do with realism. At the present time, pseudo-realism in art is represented by numerous trends linked, in their majority with the Freudian defence of the subconscious, magic realism, intuitive realism, stream of consciousness, new cynicism, all kinds of mysticism and finally the literature of things. All these forms of pseudo-realism are the obverse of modernism at least they are closely interrelated. Many theoreticians of today's modernistic trends make a habit of imitating realism doing everything to divert it from a truthful depiction of life. Today's modernists are trying to justify their stand by asserting that they are immeasurably more consistent realists than the classical realists of the past who were burdened with the material load of life and the need to keep within the framework of the time's social thought.

The existentialists, the pragmatists, the transcendentalists and others declare, as did the Machists, that they have assumed positions above materialism, realism and idealism, whose limitations and narrowness they have overcome. Many contemporary writers proclaim that it is the call of the times to rise above realism and its one dimensional representation. In the light of the materialist theory of knowledge it becomes obvious that this concept is illusory and capitulationist.

In *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* Lenin convincingly showed that the impoverishment of human knowledge and art leads to a withdrawal from life. In the light of Lenin's words on the subject we clearly see the delusiveness of the decadent literary scholars' protestations that modernism extends the sphere of art, introduces man to new worlds and broadens his range of knowledge. Today's apologists of modernism have no newer things to say than the Machists who to quote Lenin, love to declaim that they are philosophers who completely trust the evidence of our sense-organs, who regard the world as actually being what it seems to us to be, full of sounds, colours, etc., whereas to the materialists, they say, the world is dead, devoid of sound and colour, and in its reality different from what it seems to be and so forth.¹ Lenin points out that a similar point of view was developed by J. Petzoldt, for instance, in his works *Introduction to the Philosophy of Pure Experience*.

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works* Vol. 14 p 128.

and *World Problem From the Positivist Standpoint* In actual fact these theoreticians offer subjectivist contrived and lean abstractions in place of a comprehension of the world in all its diversity For the materialists Lenin countered the Machists the world is richer more vigorous and diverse than it seems because our sensations are not restricted to the closed sphere of the subjective and embrace the infinite, the developing objective reality, and all the inexhaustible richness of life

* * *

According to Lenin, a progressive writer always focuses his attention on the essential aspects of life which passes before us in an infinite variety of phenomena and features The writer's attention may also be drawn to some phenomena of secondary importance But endowing the principal characters of a book with a random selection of social or individual features magnifying the personal or on the contrary, belittling the main phenomena will not give a truthful portrayal of life The writers whom Lenin appraised most highly were the ones who always chose the more essential aspects of life to describe in their books, and who solved or at least raised, the most pressing social problems of the day

The relationship between the general and the individual the particular, or the accidental, is one of the most acute problems in today's literary polemics about the manner in which the image of the world and man should be embodied While Marxist aesthetics holds that the function of art is to reflect the essential aspects of reality to create types and to bring out the general from the chaos of the accidental the anti realist schools are on the contrary endeavouring to discard generalisations altogether and limit the sphere of art exclusively to the reflection of the personal, the inessential and the accidental

Expressing this point of view in his own way, the French author Alain Robbe-Grillet leader of the modernist new novel school writes in the foreword to his film novel *L'année dernière à Marienbad* about the aesthetics of the accidental, the insignificantly elusive Robbe-Grillet believes that the movement of human thought is more complex, interesting and less definite than given in the standard realist patterns, that thought leaps over the essential and, on the contrary,

records with amazing precision that which is inessential, repeating itself and reversing. The pivot of art, he says, is just this elusive world of dark regions, *idees fixes*, memory blanks and strangenesses.

In recent years the most fashionable form of apologia for the inessential has been an art which records only conglomeration of chaotic impressions. This also applies to any sort of conclusions about the distinctive character of the modern man. The peculiarities of appearance, behaviour and inner feelings of a limited circle of people cannot make a basis for any universal concepts. Yet it is in precisely this manner that all the modernistic notions of the 20th century personality are formed with their different variants of disintegration or integration, and their negation of distinctions between the greatly varied types of contemporary men.

The new aesthetics, it is maintained, will lead to a re-making of all the forms of art, elevating it to a new stage where it will become completely free of any sort of content and will manifest itself naturally simply as the reaction of the reader or the spectator. This idea is far from new: it was presented with sufficient clarity in Dadaism. It proceeds from the philosophy of rejecting any laws governing life or any purpose of life, and of perceiving the world as a senseless chaos. Here the senseless and the incidental make the essence of life and art their sole theme and content.

Lenin's materialist interpretation of the correlation between the general and the particular, between synthesis and analysis, shows that their interrelations are very real and extremely mobile. Contrarily the anti-realist aesthetic and philosophical trends display a common aptitude to counterpose analysis to synthesis and the general to the particular.

The development of modern literature calls for a closer examination of the interrelations between the analytical and the synthetic, the discrete and the integral in the artistic perception of reality. At the present time, in view of the crisis in the main trends of the bourgeois spiritual synthesis, a one-sided analytical perception of the world and a tendency to analyse the particular have clearly gained prominence.

The philosophico-aesthetic theories denying the efficacy of generalising thought originated from the widespread notion of the destruction of all ideals and moral values in our

epoch, and the immersion of modern society into a sort of spiritual vacuum. From this stems the concept which is steadily gaining influence that ours is an age of analysis of disconnectedness and not of synthesis and generalisation. And this gives rise to the philosophy and aesthetics of the general discreteness of the world and of the 20th century personality.

Today the most fashionable social and philosophical theories are built on the concept that the spiritual development of modern civilisation has brought the 20th century to a crisis of all creeds, and the allegation is made to quote the popular expression that its only creed is that no one really believes in anything. The trials of our historical and spiritual life open many different roads to disillusion to a sceptical attitude towards principles and moral criteria to the thought that concrete though disconnected facts are the only authentic reality. People who embark on one of these roads are bound to lose their ability to perceive the world in its wholeness as an integral thing. In our time the contradictions and difficulties in the development of revolution and socialism are utilised as one of the channels through which all sorts of sceptics enter the literary scene. There are certain unstable circles among the intellectuals who are quick to lose faith and their sense of responsibility when history takes one of its rougher turns.

When an artist loses faith in the power of definite spiritual principles and ideas he gradually loses his ability to perceive the world objectively and instead acquires a distorted and minified vision of society and man.

The propensity for analytical one-sidedness is spreading to all the components of art. The loss of an integral perception of the world or in other words of the general features and regularities of being which is revealed by the artist in separate facts manifests itself in a sadly limited notion of the nature and function of literature. The exponents of the aesthetics of discreteness hold that with the development of powerful modern means of information 20th century art has lost its former mission of cognising the world and probing human phenomenology.

The most typical and active features of the anti-realist trends today include a destruction of an integral image of society and man, a destruction of all spiritual values and a rejection of a definite world outlook. The concept of integ

view" as opposed to "circumstances" of the world may be interpreted and examined from different points of view. Still, the main criterion of "integrity" in the perception of the world is the extent to which reality has been conceived and creatively assimilated, and this criterion is determined first of all by the writer's point of view and his ability to "illuminate" all the facets of his subject with his attitude to it, his thoughts and feelings about it. The mission of the writer is to create the universal to the general, to give an intellectual and emotional synthesis of phenomena, and not restrict his art to the bounds of a particular fact. Real art plays the part of a unifying and sublimating power that discloses something generally common and new in the particular and opens a window into the great wide world.

Many of these authors who have gone through the experience of conflicting aesthetic feelings now realize the desirability of comprehending the dissonances of the world and the authenticity of isolated phenomena. A trait common to most of these authors, for all the disparity in their rendering of the dramatic problems in modern reality is the striving to recover the integral image of the world which they had once possessed. For only art that is infused with thought and capable of interpretation and generalization can answer their vital need to depict the life about them.

Lessons : Shows that greater art must reflect the essential aspects of reality both as good today to explain a number of problems taking place in modern literature. By turning to the essential sides of life, socialist literature is able to draw far-reaching conclusions, to probe deep into the meaning of things and produce an integral picture of the world.

PEOPLE MUST DREAM

Realism—the highest stage of artistic creativity—combines richness of thinking and imagination with fidelity to truth in portraying life.

Works of progressive literature are always based on actual facts and developments, but genuine art does not imply an empirical representation of life with accurately rendered happenings. The writer's imagination, intuition and inspiration are essential if his work is to be a work of art. His probing into actual facts and his generalisations will not

encroach upon the imaginativeness of his plot but will on the contrary give it food for further development

When the Russian socialist movement was only just emerging Lenin used to encourage people to dream of things to come. There is no need to prove that "useful dreaming", based on a sound knowledge of the laws of society's development, is an extremely important trait to cultivate in literature. To be more precise, without imagination there can be no great discoveries and no great works of art. Imagination is, of course, conditioned in its turn by the social environment, while its bounds and character are determined by the given historical epoch. Lenin's theory of reflection fully explains the origin and nature of creative imagination as one of the means of enlarging human knowledge.

Pisarev's bold creative dream appealed to Lenin because it was not at odds with reality since its general direction corresponded to the forward movement of life. I shall try to hide behind Pisarev's back. Lenin wrote ironically having in mind his opponents who denied people the right to a revolutionary dream. He then adduced a large excerpt from Pisarev's article *Blunders of Immature Thinking* citing the arguments of a critic who asserts the author's right to get ahead of the natural course of events. Pisarev writes: if man were completely deprived of the ability to dream in this way if he could not from time to time run ahead and mentally conceive in an entire and completed picture, the product to which his hands are only just beginning to lend shape then I cannot at all imagine what stimulus there would be to induce man to undertake and complete extensive and strenuous work in the sphere of art, science and practical endeavour. The rift between dreams and reality causes no harm if only the person dreaming believes seriously in his dream if he attentively observes life compares his observations with his castles in the air and if generally speaking he works conscientiously for the achievement of his fantasies. If there is some connection between dreams and life then all is well. Lenin remarked in conclusion that Of this kind of dreaming there is unfortunately too little in our movement.¹

Lenin counterposed this revolutionary creative kind of dreaming when the thought runs ahead of the natural course

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, pp. 500-10.

of events, to conservatism and political pedestrianism. A revolutionary dream breaks through the bounds of philistinism, leads a man forward, lends him courage and energy, and gives him a glimpse of the future. Without it nothing great can be achieved in science, art or in any sphere of practical activity. Lenin used to say quite bluntly that a Communist who is incapable of dreaming—in other words, of seeing things in perspective, is a poor Communist.

The course of history poses problems of an unprecedented magnitude and solving them calls for creative dreaming and imagination. Speaking at the 11th Party Congress Lenin said: "This quality is extremely valuable, it is wrong to think that only poets need imagination. That is a silly prejudice! It is needed even in mathematics: it would have been impossible to discover the differential and integral calculus without imagination."¹

People's dreams are not separated from reality by a stone wall, and Lenin regarded the ability to dream as an essential component in the process of cognition. He thought it necessary to mention this even when criticising those political speculators who overstepped all bounds between reality and fantasy. The materialist theory of knowledge presupposes a fruitful, creative imagination and Lenin said: "For even in the simplest generalisation, in the most elementary general idea (table in general) *there is* a certain bit of *fantasy* (Vice versa it would be stupid to deny the role of fantasy even in the strictest science of Pisarev on useful dreaming, as an impulse to work, and on empty daydreaming)."²

Lenin predicted a new, unprecedented upsurge in creative dreaming in the future socialist society. The complete emancipation of the working masses, their participation in the attainment of historical tasks and the full development of talents and aptitudes would lead to the most daring ventures and ambitious plans. As socialist society advanced, the useful dreams of mankind would grow in scale and scope.

In this connection it might be instructive to recall Lenin's words as quoted in the reminiscences of V. I. Anuchin, a Siberian writer. In 1897 as an exile in Krasnoyarsk Lenin took part in a discussion on what literature would be like

¹ V. I. Lenin *Collected Works* Vol 33 p 318

² *Ibid*, Vol 38 p 372-73

under socialism. A certain sceptic, who later turned Menshevik, mockingly recited a line of poetry: Ah dreams vain dreams where is your sweetness! At this Lenin flared up and said: Yes dreams young man. Dreams! If a man has no dream to cherish he turns into an animal. Dreams impel progress. And the greatest dream is socialism. The sceptic persisted: Are people going to dream under socialism? To which Lenin said: Do you think they are going to guzzle themselves from the trough and gleefully snort from satiation? Socialism will open up new and magnificent vistas for the boldest of dreams.¹

Lenin's taste in art was not confined to realist literature in the narrow sense of the term. He also liked romantic stories which embodied man's dream of freedom and a happier future and he was fond of Gorky's *Song of the Falcon* and *Stormy Petrel*. When in Paris Lenin enjoyed reading Victor Hugo's romantic poems about the revolution of 1848. And Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya recalls that sometimes he spent his sleepless nights reading Emile Verhaeren.

His liking of romantic literature is by no means at odds with the theory of reflection. It is, in fact, the materialist theory of reflection which gives the most profound and well grounded explanation justifying the existence of the numerous and diverse trends and forms of literary expression.

Lenin counterposed useful dreaming, or revolutionary romanticism to empty daydreaming, and rejected all manner of reactionary pseudo-romantic trends and notions. In particular he sharply criticised the Utopian romanticism of the Narodniks. His work *A Characterisation of Economic Romanticism* where he gives an analysis of the teaching of Sismondi, a Swiss scholar, contains many extremely valuable theoretical propositions on the philosophical nature of different types of romanticism. In Sismondi's theory Lenin discovered much that was in common with the doctrines of the Narodniks. Sismondi had published a utopian criticism of capitalism but it was made from a standpoint that clashed with the dreams cherished by the great socialist Utopians of the past. The difference between them, Lenin wrote, was that. The authors referred to anticipated the future. They looked in the direction in which development was in fact proceeding, they, indeed, were ahead.

¹ *Sibirskiy Ogn* (Siberian Lights) 1947, No. 2 p. 86.

of that development Sismondi, however *turned his back* on this development, his utopia did not anticipate the future but restored the past ¹

In 1911 Lenin condemned the Vekhist or in other words a counter revolutionary interpretation of the term romanticism which prevailed in the liberal press He said We cannot help protesting against such an interpretation ²

History itself has confirmed the potency of Lenin's dream which ran ahead of the natural course of events His injunction People Must Dream! has indeed been acted upon as evidenced by the ambitious and magnificent endeavour of the Soviet people These words spoken when the Russian socialist movement was only just emerging make one of the sources of inspiration for Soviet literature Useful dreaming while giving wings to socialist realist literature is at the same time one of its organic components The fruitfulness of inspired dreaming of revolutionary romanticism has been conclusively confirmed by our country's heroic history, and by what the Soviet people have achieved in science, in art, and in the construction of a new society

Lenin makes a clear distinction between great historical fantasies inspired by the course of life, and contrived petty ones He spoke of this in connection with the revolutionary reconstruction of the world at the 7th All Russia Congress of Soviets He said It is not surprising that such great historical tasks frequently give rise to great visions which develop side by side with many small unsuccessful dreams ³ Great fantasies, inspired by a desire for great accomplishments, are a potent force that propels mankind forward always forward

What distinguishes an artistic vision of the world from all the other forms of knowledge is its much larger content of fantasy, imagination, intuition conjecture instinct and subconsciousness

Social consciousness is divided into ideology and social psychology a division which is not really reflected in literary research where the greatly disparate aspects of art and of man's inner world are primitively labelled ideology ,

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works* Vol 2 p 245

² Ibid Vol 17 p 391

³ Ibid , Vol 30, p. 229

The result of such research is very often schematic and unconvincing

Social psychology includes all the sensory intellectual volitional and intuitive aspects of human perception. Man's inner world also includes individual psychology, personal traits, impressions, unsystematised notions and ideas, emotions and inclinations, peculiarities of character, habits and the subconscious. And art embodies all the facets of man's spiritual life in their natural interpenetration.

The process of aesthetically exploring the world in other words the process of artistic creativity is an extremely complex one, and far from being confined to ideological selection, evaluation and rational perception it involves intuition, imagination, emotions and subconscious impulses. The whole of the artist's spiritual being is engaged in the work of creation and he displays his personal sentiments, inclinations and tastes in the way he handles the material he takes from real life. His imagination, or fantasy, is the creative force that arranges the raw material artistically, shapes it into a single whole and lends it the form into which he pours his stream of impressions. An artist who rejects this complex process will only produce something illustrative, didactic and circumscribed but never a work of aesthetical worth.

Elucidating the role of intuition, imagination and fantasy in artistic creativity was one of the main objects in Gorky's literary research. To quote him, intuition means complementing experience with those components which the writer lacked in order to produce a perfectly finished image. Further, Gorky wrote: "To imagine means to give shape, an image to chaos. Imagination concludes the process of studying and selecting material, and finishes shaping it into a living, positive or negative, significant social type."¹

For a book to have an impact on the reader its author must be able to present his hero in all his inimitable individuality and to live through this hero's experiences with him. This skill is combined of the author's keenness of observation, his ability to store up impressions, his knowledge of people, his social and psychological perspicacity and the power of his imagination. These are the conditions

¹ M. Gorky, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, pp. 333-34 (in Russian).

for the second vision", as Balzac calls it, an ability common to great writers to *see* the people conjured up by their imagination

The power generated by these spheres of the human spirit still remains to be fully explored and introduced into the theoretical armory of our aesthetic thinking

In many critical works, problems concerning the life of society, the course of history the destiny of the individual and the character of man are for the most part examined along a single track merely in the sphere of consciousness, thought patterns and ideas Unquestionably, this has to be done But then, surely the image of man in art cannot be rendered through the dynamics of his consciousness only?

Konstantin Fedin says in his autobiography that a developed imagination and fantasy are essential qualities for a writer to have Recalling his own seeking he writes I believed that a truthful reflection of life in literature and 'pure invention', or the fantasy of the author were two conflicting concepts In actual fact there is no such conflict in the work of a realist writer Gorky once explained it to me very clearly in one of his letters that an artistic image is not 'pure invention' at all but 'a thing of genuine reality which only art can create an extract, a concentrate of reality produced by the mysterious workings of the writer's imagination According to Gorky the hero traits encountered in thousands of books are, in fact the dust of impressions compressed into rock and transformed by the writer into an image, or what I mistakenly called pure invention'¹ Before rendering images or events in literature the author processes them intellectually and emotionally which has of course, been written about by many authors past and present

Lenin's works provide the key to the correct solution of the acute and vital problem, always central in art concerning the correlation between consciousness and all the other aspects of man's spiritual life Expressing his philosophical and aesthetical views, Lenin stresses the need to explore all these many facets of man's spiritual nature not just in the sphere of consciousness but also the subconscious instinct, habits

¹ K. Fedin, *Works* Vol 1, Moscow 1952 pp 13-14 (in Russian)

With the best writers the literary heroes their characters and relations are so convincingly true to life because all the stimuli of their actions the rational the emotional and the instinctive are prominently visible, and what we see before us is a living person. Contrarily, if these stimuli are trimmed down to a pattern we see nothing better than a one-dimensional impoverished image endowed with schematic feelings and actions. Books of the latter type leave the reader indifferent because the motives are too rational, and all the other sides of human nature emotions and individual inclinations are left out of account.

* * *

The Marxist Leninist theory of reflection presupposes a fusion of the intellectual and the emotional knowledge of reality. Marx wrote: "man asserts himself in the material world not only by means of thought but also through *all* his senses." In Lenin's opinion man's emotional self-assertion plays an important role in his aesthetical assimilation of the world. Imaginative thinking and the laws of beauty are inseparable from emotional perception.

The cultivation of aesthetical tastes, that is a striving for the beautiful and the noble, is of exceptional importance in man's self-assertion in reality, a source from which he draws his spiritual strength. While acknowledging the beneficial power of emotions in all fields of human activity, Lenin particularly stressed its importance in art. Speaking of books by formalists, he said: "I do not understand them. I derive no pleasure from them whatsoever."¹ A work of art must appeal to the emotional in man, to give delight, and bring aesthetic satisfaction. By its very nature art is sensory and concrete and, consequently, it has a stronger emotional impact than does science, for instance.

Lenin's interpretation of artistic creativity is of great help in elucidating the vital question of the relations between the cognitive and the emotional in art. This question has been heatedly debated in recent years. Some authors, in an attempt to define the specific nature of art, deny the tenet, shaped even before Marxist aesthetics, that science and art have the same content, but science cognises reality

¹ V. I. Lenin on Literature and Art, p. 660 (in Russian)

in concepts while art in images. As a result, the conclusion is drawn that the aim of science is to furnish knowledge and the aim of art to shape man's spiritual and emotional world and satisfy his aesthetical requirements. Posing the question in this manner betrays a desire to find the dividing line between art and the other forms of knowledge. But the policy of opposing thought to feeling and knowledge to emotional impact—a policy which has long been promoted by idealist aesthetics—cannot be a fruitful one. The tendency to isolate art from science to deprive it of its cognitive function does much harm to the development of literature. Art like all the other forms of knowledge generalises and typifies life's phenomena. From the materialist theory of reflection it follows that in the process of generalisation the emotional, the cognitive and typifying sides of art are indivisible. A peculiarity specific to the nature of an artistic image is that it evokes an emotional reaction that spreads to other similar images and phenomena and the original image therefore acquires the meaning of a broad generalisation. The emotional and aesthetical impact is evoked by all the aspects of art, the concretely sensory as well as the generalising. In saying that genuine works of art must give pleasure Lenin emphasised the emotionally cognitive side of art and artistic perception.

He believed that without passion without emotion there could be no fruitful activity and no struggle especially struggle for ideological principles. Lenin refers to one French philosopher who said that Dead ideas are those that appear in elegant garments with no asperity or daring. They are dead because they are put into general circulation and become part of the ordinary intellectual baggage of the great army of philistines. Strong ideas are those that shock and scandalise evoke indignation anger and animosity in some, and enthusiasm in others.¹ In other words, strong ideas must have the passion of conviction behind them. Lenin rejected Golay's erroneous and unconsidered opinion that historical materialism was not sufficiently idealistic.² (the word here is a derivative from ideal V S)

Lenin regarded the truthful rendering of feelings and emotions as essential as the truthful depiction of events

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works* Vol 21 p 353

² Ibid , p 355

When speaking to A V Lunacharsky about Henri Barbusse's *Le Feu* he said The reader feels with his every nerve that everything happened exactly like that and that was exactly how everything was felt and said ¹ It is this fusion of truthfully described events and emotions that makes the novel so convincing and impressive

The materialist understanding of the cognitive and educational role of art is countered by most of the modernist trends today with the thesis that the sole function of art is to portray emotional experience regardless of the material on which the work is based and irrespective of the kind of response it evokes The aesthetics of emotional experience, prominent in the anti realist trends, is used to substantiate the modernistic theories on the nature of man and art as irrational elusive things ungoverned by any general laws This aesthetics is especially close in spirit to existentialism in view of the objectively erased dividing lines between good and evil the progressive and the reactionary (being in equal measure merely objects engendered by emotions)

The substance of this aesthetics as differing from realist aesthetics is defined in *The Struggle of the Modern* (London, 1963) by Stephen Spender, a British poet and art scholar The object of realist art, he says is life in all its manifestations A realist is attracted by the noise in the streets the innermost secrets of the soul and the historical destinies of the people He is interested in sufferings and horrors, in fantasy and madness but in precisely that measure of importance which they occupy in the general course of life By no means however, do they appear as a sort of all embracing form of human existence

The modernists, says Spender, are under the spell of a world which by passing the intellect directly affects the emotions This means that a modernist is the object and not the subject, not a historiographer who studies the epoch but a seismograph which records its shocks upheavals and jolts without distinguishing the causes thereof According to Spender, this aesthetics is common to all contemporary modernist trends that are irrational in their inner substance And in its real substance, this aesthetics is merely one of the variants of existentialist thinking

¹ *Vechernaya Krasnaya Gazeta* May 16 1933

In art, emotion is philosophic and it acquires a definite ideological meaning. Philosophy, on its part, is presented in its emotionally assimilated form. Philosophical concepts and ideology in general exist in art not as straightforward data but as motives underlying the development of emotional experience.

Among the general problems and notions that call for a more comprehensive scientific investigation, attention must be given alongside with social and individual psychology, to the problem of the subconscious which has not yet found its true place in our methodological patterns, a place that would fully correspond to its role in the creative process and in the content of art.

The problem of the conscious and the subconscious in art has its own long history, marked by struggle, differences of opinion, polarity of viewpoints and attempts to make extreme one-sided notions absolute. The defence of the subconscious, which excludes thought and ideology from art, sometimes gives rise to viewpoints that are as one-sided because they leave the role of intuition, fantasy and imagination completely out of account.

It is difficult to imagine a work of genuine art based on a purely intellectual, rational vision of reality, of the destinies of people and their spiritual life. The works of Gorky, Mayakovsky, Fadeyev and Sholokhov show man in his organic wholeness, in a fusion of all his intellectual and intuitive desires and impulses. In contemporary Soviet literature there is a clearly discernible tendency to interpret in artistic images the invisible yet mighty link between man's social dominant and the sphere of all his other innermost, subtle emotions, and the uniqueness of his character, his habits and inclinations.

The problem of the subconscious is of essential importance in rendering the inner world of literary characters. The heroes of Gorky, Sholokhov, Alexei Tolstoi and Fadeyev are so convincing because the stimuli of their actions, both the rational and the instinctive, are made clearly visible and as a result we see living people, human nature in all its fullness. If the subconscious is disregarded, the image produced will be one-dimensional and incomplete and the stimuli of his actions and passions both schematic and contrived.

Disregard for human nature, for the subconscious and for

the individual logic peculiar to a given man's character inevitably results in a rationalistic scheme in place of a true-to-life image and true-to-life behaviour. A desire to embody the sphere of the subconscious and a penchant for primordial naturalness are entirely different things. The subconscious originates from a historical environment, it adapts itself biopsychologically to a creative purpose, takes shape in the general key and directedness of the intellect, gradually becomes bone of the bone and eventually a habit.

For a writer to be able to embody his ideas, standpoint and political convictions in a book, he must have a wealth of material provided by life itself to work on. The finest idea will remain dead and foreign to art if it is not rooted in reality. A truly creative, potent idea which has little in common with one-sided rationalism or illustrativeness combines motive, thought with purposeful, life-giving passion which permeates the entire pattern of the book's imagery as required by the logic of the lives described and the character of the heroes. In literature, human thinking itself becomes enriched by the author's emotion by his life experience.

Lenin could not conceive of literary endeavour without infatuation, without passion. The impact of a work of literature is measured not only by the truthfulness with which it describes the processes and phenomena in the development of society, but also by the emotion that has been put into the approach to the material and to the struggle between good and evil. All the great works of Soviet literature were born of an organic alloy of life experience, progressive thinking and the sincere emotion of the author who felt personally involved in everything that was happening about him. This is true of Gorky, Mayakovsky, Serafimovich, Furmanov, Fadeyev, Alexei Tolstoi, Sholokhov, Makarenko, Tvardovsky, and other major writers, who militantly championed the cause of socialism. A wealth of material drawn from real life and an emotionally rich moral content, are always to be found in works of progressive literature.

AN ARTIST'S WORLD OUTLOOK AND METHOD

Consistently asserting the significance of actual reality in all forms of human thinking will provide a sound basis for comprehending the dialectical character of the term

artistic method Lenin made a note of Hegel's idea that method is not at all a sum total of speculative techniques it is inseparable from the peculiarities of the content and is not an external form, but the soul and notion of the content ¹

The term artistic method in fact implies a sum total of those basic principles which determine the author's approach to reality and his manner of selecting and rendering the facts and phenomena of life. A formal, one-sided interpretation of the term is to present it as something purely subjective, only connected with the writer's personal attitude towards his material and his own personal tastes. Actually this is just one side of the matter, a very essential one though it is. Apart from the author's subjective stand there are also the objective social premises which determine his artistic vision of the world. The existence of one or another method is impossible outside of the epoch which engendered it.

The world outlook of a writer is expressed first of all in the way he envisages life, in the way he distinguishes between the essential and the incidental, the near and the far, the new and the old. Today, many revisionist minded critics are trying to distort the substance of Lenin's characterisation of the work of Lev Tolstoy and other classics with the aim of rejecting the role of world outlook in art. They interpret Lenin's words to imply that any embodiment of reality calls for appraisal. What Lenin actually asserted was the dialectical unity of artistic truth and the writer's world outlook. As he put it, Tolstoy's work reflected not just the conflicts in life itself but also the contradictions in his own views.

Historically speaking a world outlook is not always integral or harmonious. More often than not it is very complex and sometimes contradictory. By and large it is not right to reduce the problem to a disparity or closeness between method and world outlook. Other immeasurably more complex contradictions are usually reflected in literature such as the principle of portraying different aspects of reality which always want to be investigated with historical concreteness.

Identifying method with world outlook goes counter to the

¹ V I Lenin, *Collected Works* Vol. 38 p. 238.

facts of literature's development since this would automatically equate what the author had in mind and what he has actually said. Here, the logic of life itself—objective facts and processes which amend the writer's original intention and notions must also be taken into account.

This is what Gorky wrote on the subject. The work of a writer is remarkable not only for the power of direct observation and experience, but also for the ability of the material he is working on to put up a resistance to his own class sympathies and antipathies. It is this power of resistance that can explain the fact that one encounters more and more writers in bourgeois society who take the stand of unbiased historians of their class who ruthlessly expose its vices.¹ It also explains the fact that some writers, despite the limitations of their political views, followed the truth of life and produced valuable works which helped the progressive revolutionary forces. This fact has been given a substantiation in Marxist-Leninist aesthetics. Lenin regarded art as one of the contradictory and complex processes of cognising life—a process governed by its own specific laws, and he always took into account the involved interaction of the artist's views and the reality he portrayed in his work. And that is why he separated the mistaken views of the great writers from the truth of life embodied in the splendid images of their realistic books.

In the light of Lenin's statements we clearly see the fallacy of the viewpoint maintained by the Proletkult writers and the vulgar sociologists that the artistic method is a world outlook materialised in images.

A writer's world outlook, it must be borne in mind, is too complex a thing to be derived from one single abstract doctrine and to be exhausted by his political statements and wordings. It was this oversimplified interpretation that gave rise to the theory of the so-called Voprekists who built up the discrepancy between method and world outlook into a law of artistic creativity.

For instance, Balzac's complex and contradictory world outlook cannot by any means be reduced to his legitimism. The well-known definition given by Engels to the discrepancy between Balzac's legitimistic prejudices and the objective content of his books provides no reason for coun-

¹ M. Gorky *Collected Works*, Vol. 26 p. 217 (in Russian)

terposing Balzac's writings to his world outlook Engels did not dwell on his legitimism alone, but spoke of the other sides of Balzac's world outlook his sober understanding of social relations and the inevitable fall of the aristocracy, and his acknowledgement of the historically significant role of republican heroes. The only people of whom Balzac spoke with undisguised admiration were his most violent opponents the fighters for the republic men who at the time (1830-1836) were the true representatives of the masses. One of the greatest victories of realism and one of the most valuable features of old Balzac, in the opinion of Engels was that Balzac saw the necessity of the downfall of his favourite nobles and described them as people deserving no better fate, and that he saw the real men of the future where, for the time being they alone were to be found.¹ It is these aspects of Balzac's world outlook from which his realism stemmed and drew its strength.

In his view on literature Lenin always defined the complex dialectics of the relationship between the writer's world outlook and the life's material which he embodied in his works giving a precise exposition of both the writer's historical significance and his delusions. Lenin's example shows that a desire to streamline and varnish historical facts or tone down the writer's illusions and reactionary tendencies is as foreign to scientific literary analysis as a striving to reduce the whole of the writer's endeavour to these illusions or tendencies.

Gogol is an instance of complexities and contradictions. His writings objectively served the struggle against the autocracy and serfdom, while his political thinking lagged behind the truth reflected in his works and as Gorky put it, he was frightened out of his wits by the powerful impact of his own realism. Gogol's delusions, which became especially intensified in the last years of his life are most evident in his book *Selected Excerpts from My Correspondence with Friends*. Belinsky who esteemed Gogol as the pride and glory of Russian literature subjected this book to wrathful and passionate criticism.

Lenin called Belinsky's impassioned letter to Gogol an outstanding document of progressive social thought and literary criticism, thus doing full justice to its significance.

¹ K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Correspondence* 1965 p. 403.

Gogol's world outlook cannot be narrowed down to his assertion of monarchy, religion and serfdom for it is just one aspect of it. We must not forget the admiration with which the revolutionary democrats spoke of Gogol, calling him the leader of the Russian society striving for enlightenment. Nor would it be out of place to recall here what Lenin said about Gogol's closeness to Belinsky. In his article 'Yet Another Anti Democratic Campaign' when speaking of the spread of democratic literature after 1905, Lenin said: "The ideas of Belinsky and Gogol, which endeared these authors to Nekrasov, as indeed to any decent person in Russia, ran through the whole of that new market literature."¹ Also in this article Lenin mentions the *Selected Excerpts from My Correspondence with Friends* in connection with Belinsky's letter to Gogol. Thus, while noting the latter's reactionary views voiced in this particular book, Lenin at the same time finds a closeness between the progressive aspects of Gogol's world outlook, reflected in his wonderful works of fiction, and the ideas championed by Belinsky.

Lenin also characterised the glaring contradictions in the books and world outlook of Lev Tolstoy. While drawing a distinction between Tolstoy the artist and Tolstoy the thinker, Lenin does not place the two in opposition to each other. In his article 'L. N. Tolstoy' he points out that in his works Tolstoy has reflected, as an artist, thinker and preacher, the historical uniqueness and the contradictions of the first Russian revolution. In the article 'L. N. Tolstoy and the Modern Workers Movement' Lenin says: "It was this rapid, painful, drastic demolition of all the old pillars of old Russia that was reflected in the works of Tolstoy the artist, and in the views of Tolstoy the thinker."² And in his article 'L. N. Tolstoy and His Epoch' Lenin states that the contradictions between the writer's world outlook and his writings were expressive of the objective historical contradictions of the period 1861-1905 during which Tolstoy matured as an artist and thinker.

Lenin's views on Tolstoy are also valuable from the point of view of methodology. In the light of his statements it becomes clear how inadmissible it is, for instance, to

¹ V. I. Lenin *Collected Works* Vol. 18, p. 313.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 16, p. 331.

reduce the ideological essence of Turgenev's novels to his liberalism. And yet views of this sort are sometimes expressed in monographs about this classic of Russian literature.

As a rule, those critics who maintain this simplified interpretation of Turgenev dogmatically utilise some of Lenin's statements and discard others. As everyone knows, in defining the position of modern Social Democrats in his article entitled 'The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government' Lenin drew the following historical analogy: 'The modern Social Democrats' of the Scheidemann or, what is almost the same thing, of the Martov type are repelled by the Soviets, and they are drawn towards the respectable bourgeois parliament or to the Constituent Assembly, in the same way as Turgenev sixty years ago, was drawn towards a moderate monarchist and noblemen's Constitution and was repelled by the peasant democracy of Dobrolyubov and Chernyshevsky'.¹

By this analogy Lenin illustrated the emergence of two tendencies: the democratic and the liberal in the Russian social movement of the 1860's. However, when speaking of Turgenev's works he did not merely mention the liberalism of the writer's political views. The vulgar sociologists who wrote about Turgenev snatched up this one citation alone from everything Lenin had ever written on the subject. And yet Lenin laid the main stress on Turgenev's outstanding cognitive and artistic merits, on his talent for creating living characters and on the sincerity of his profound sympathy for the peasantry. From the sum total of Lenin's statements about Turgenev there emerges an image of a wonderful, humane realist writer who branded the arbitrariness of the landowners and sympathised with the serfs in their sufferings, a writer whose command of the great Russian language was truly superb. In one of his letters home Lenin wrote that it was a very tempting thought that he might be the possessor of Turgenev's collected works.

V. Bonch-Bruyevich recalls: 'Way back in his Geneva days Vladimir Ilyich often said he would like to write a detailed analysis of some of Turgenev's books. We know that he frequently quoted from Turgenev and drew comparisons with Turgenev's characters, for instance with Voroshilov from the novel *Smoke*. Many other references to Turge-

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 274.

nev show that Lenin pondered deeply on the characters created by this wonderful writer ¹

Therefore if we take Lenin's opinion of Turgenev as a whole we shall see that the objective content of his books was by no means expressive of liberalism alone. The typical characters created by Turgenev helped in the struggle against liberalism and serfdom and made readers aware of the plight of the peasantry and also the splendid spiritual qualities of the Russian people, so warmly rendered in *A Hunter's Sketches*.

Primitive views asserting that a writer's world outlook and method are one and the same thing, obscure their dialectically complex and real unity and are far removed from the theoretical and historical principles of Marxist Leninist scientific literary criticism.

* * *

Lenin's statements on literature and his theory of reflection help us to understand the strong and the weak, the lasting and the transient, the absolute and the relative in the works of major writers.

When analysing the writings of one author or another Lenin made no attempt to smooth over the complexities of his individuality to "straighten out" his image or to put down his world outlook and his work to a tendency, even if it was a predominant tendency with him. In the contradictory writings of many critical realist authors not infrequently obsessed by all manner of illusions and delusions, Lenin was able to single out all that was truthful and useful and to distinguish reason from prejudice. Most significant in this respect was his attitude to Romain Rolland, Upton Sinclair, G. B. Shaw and H. G. Wells.

Lenin was greatly impressed by Romain Rolland's articles which truthfully exposed the inhuman predatory character of the First World War. In his *Notebooks on Imperialism* Lenin made the following entry marked as was his way with a Nota Bene: excerpts from Romain Rolland's (author of *Jean Christophe*) letter in *Journal de Geneve* (22-23 Sept. Supplement). A nationalist, but with a bitter truth

¹ V. D. Bonch-Bruyevich, *Lenin on Books and Writers*, *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, April 21, 1955.

for socialists ¹ Later, these articles were included in R Rolland's collection *Au dessus de la melee* Lenin mailed them to V Karpinsky and wrote to him, afraid that they might get lost I shall either buy this issue or (if it has been sold out) get it from the library and *make a complete copy for you* ² He proposed to Romain Rolland that he should come to Russia together with the Bolsheviks And in March 1917 sent the following telegram to Henri Guilbeaux editor of *Demain* Bring Romain Rolland if he agrees in principle "At that time Rolland was anything but a man of action, as he himself said and therefore he tried not to become involved in any parties In his *Adieu au Passe* he recalls In March 1917 Lenin invited me to come to Russia with him and Guilbeaux brought me the message I refused In that moment of my spiritual evolution I did not want to meddle in what I mistakenly thought a melee of political parties and give up my role of intellectual watchman 'above all the melees I think differently today'" It was obvious to Lenin at the time how greatly Rolland's stand differed from the platform of the international socialist movement yet soon afterwards in May 1917 he made reference to Rolland in his article "Despicable Methods" In reply to the insinuations of the newspaper *Rech* (Speech) attempting to discredit the sources of *Pravda*'s international information Lenin wrote that we receive similar material about France from the *French* socialist internationalist Henri Guilbeaux friend of Romain Rolland ³ The words friend of Romain Rolland expressed Lenin's confidence both in the prestige of the writer and in the trustworthiness of *Pravda*'s French correspondent

Romain Rolland's subsequent career confirmed Lenin's perspicacity and the correctness of his judgement

Later Rolland renounced his opinion of Marxism Leninism as a social geometry far removed from the sphere of human emotions and dreams, and became profoundly convinced in the sincerity and power of this teaching The turning point in his spiritual evolution is most evident in the views he expressed on the relationship between Lenin's Party

¹ *Lenin Miscellany XXIX* p 449 (in Russian)

² *V I Lenin Collected Works* Vol 36 p 350

³ *Europe Revue mensuelle* Paris Numero 102 15 juin 1931 pp 199-200

⁴ *V I Lenin Collected Works* Vol 24 pp 422-23.

positions and art. In his famous articles "Lenin Art and Action" "On the Role of the Writer in Modern Society" and in the introduction to his collection *Compagnons de Route* Rolland stressed the vitality of Lenin's ideas in the complex and delicate sphere of art. Lenin's thoughts on the fusion of lofty dreams and world transforming action appealed to Rolland particularly. By comparing Lenin's "Il faut rêver" (People must dream) with Goethe's "Il faut agir" (People must act) he arrives at the conclusion that in revolutionary art these two aspects of people's spiritual life are interpenetrative. "People must dream" says the man of action. "People must act" says the man of dreams. The further development of socialist ideas in his books resulted in his taking up the cause of socialism. And that is how we see Rolland in his last book *L'âme enchantée* and in his passionate articles against fascism.

Once in 1886 Engels called William Morris, a young British writer a "socialist of the emotions" (in his letter to F. A. Sorge dated April 29 1886).¹ At that time Morris had just started out on his social seekings, and though his political views were rather vague he was very sincere in his feelings and strivings. A different type of socialist of the emotions is Upton Sinclair. It was Lenin who called him that. Commenting on Sinclair's *Socialism and War* Lenin warned writers against underestimating the role of progressive thought in rendering complex social processes.

By posing political problems frankly Sinclair was able to voice many correct thoughts on the danger of an imperialist war. The antagonism between the narrow class interests of the bourgeoisie and the interests of mankind in its majority became especially evident in the epoch of imperialism and the more sensitive writers could not fail to see it. Many of these writers were a long way from Marxist thinking but they were affected by the inexorable logic of developments just the same. The principles of socialism were not fully understood by everyone and were apprehended emotionally rather than scientifically by many of these writers. Lenin wrote "Sinclair is a socialist of the emotions without any theoretical training. He states the issue in simple fashion, incensed by the approach of war, he seeks

¹ Marx/Engels *Werke* Bd 36 S 480

salvation from it in socialism"¹ Lenin's point was that a writer had to take a definite stand in order to give a truthful portrayal of reality Upton Sinclair's brochure testifies to the great shifts taking place in the ideology of the intellectuals These shifts have found their reflection in world literature but even the most sincere attempts to discover the correct solution to the main problems of the age may prove futile if the writer's handling of his material is not based on progressive social theory Sinclair's indignation at the imperialist war proved naive and his appeals to stop it quite ineffective On this point Lenin wrote 'Sinclair is naive in his appeal although fundamentally it is a very correct one he is naive because he ignores the development of mass socialism over the last fifty years and the struggle of trends within socialism, he ignores the conditions for the growth of revolutionary action when an objectively revolutionary situation and a revolutionary organisation exist The emotional approach cannot make up for that The intense and bitter struggle between powerful trends in socialism between the opportunist and revolutionary trends, cannot be evaded by the use of rhetoric'² The correctness of Lenin's opinion of Upton Sinclair was fully confirmed

G B Shaw's original satire, by means of which he exposed the morals of capitalist society was well approved by Lenin In 1915-1916 reviewing *Weltkrieg und Imperialismus Sozialpsychologische Dokumente und Beobachtungen vom Weltkrieg 1914 15* (a book by Gustaf Frederik Steffen a Swedish publicist) Lenin remarked on the 'juicy quotations from G B Shaw about British hypocrisy At the same time he pointed out the duality of Shaw's political views because of what he wrote about the need to crush Germany

A conversation between Lenin and Shaw held in 1919, is recorded in *Six Weeks in Russia in 1919* by Arthur Ransome a British journalist Recalling one of Shaw's public appearances in London Ransome quotes Lenin as saying "Shaw is a good man fallen among Fabians, and a great deal further left than his company He turned fiercely on an interrupter who said that Shaw was a clown He may be a clown for the bourgeoisie in a bourgeois state, but they

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works* Vol. 21, p. 263.

² Ibid p. 265

would not think him a clown in a revolution"¹ Lenin appreciated Shaw's writings, overcomplicated and eccentric though they seemed in form, for their humane purpose and serious content dictated by his refusal to compromise with bourgeois falsehood and hypocrisy

Shaw was a great sympathiser of the October 1917 Socialist Revolution in Russia. In June 1921, he sent Lenin as a token of personal regard a copy of his *Back to Methuselah: A Metabiological Pentateuch* with the following inscription "To Nicolas Lenin, the only European ruler who is displaying the ability, character and knowledge proper to his responsible position"

Lenin's marginal notes made against Shaw's foreword to this book show the breadth of his approach to the complex and contradictory features of modern critical realist literature. He points to the fallacy of Shaw's social reformist, Fabianist illusions and approvingly marks off the passages where Shaw truthfully exposes the hypocritical self-interested politics and morals of the powers that be in the capitalist world, the instigators of the imperialist war. We find Lenin's NB against Shaw's criticism of bourgeois upbringing where from childhood people are taught to respect idleness, luxury and parasitism, and further down where Shaw says that in England power belongs to "militarist imperialists (in chronic terror of invasion and subjugation), pompous tuft-hunting fools, commercial adventurers, financial parasites on the money market."

Lenin uncompromisingly exposed the weak points in Shaw who was susceptible to social reformist illusions, and called him politically naive for believing in the efficacy of Sidney and Beatrice Webb's social theories.

Lenin's numerous marginal notes made in H. G. Wells' *Russia in the Shadows* are also illustrative of his attitude to the books written by critical realists in his day. It is common knowledge that there was much H. G. Wells failed to understand in the events of the Great October Socialist Revolution, and actually failed to appreciate the main thing: the inexhaustible creative powers of a liberated people. Lenin commented on the attacks on Marxism and Marx contained in this book, saying that they testified to

¹ Arthur Ransome *Six Weeks in Russia in 1919* London, July 1919 p. 78.

the narrowness of the author's political notions but he underlined the parts where Wells gave a truthful account of events of the imperialists hostility to the revolution and their strivings to strangle young Soviet Russia by means of blockade

Lenin's underscorings and NBs need no interpreting. They either indicate the author's mistaken or one-sided allegations, or on the contrary draw attention to his correct judgements of the revolution and the new Russia. The following lines, for instance, are ticked off and marked with a NB: "the threatening and disconcerting fact is that social and economic system very like our own and intimately connected with our own has crashed".¹ Here Wells has voiced an objective opinion on the creative transforming effect of the revolution on all the aspects of the country's life. Elsewhere Lenin underscores the author's view of the revolution as a destructive process only threatening the very existence of civilisation in other countries. Wells wrote: "It is highly improbable that the collapse will be limited to its boundaries. Both eastward and westward other great regions may, one after another, tumble into the big hole in civilisation thus created. Possibly all modern civilisation may tumble in."²

History has already confirmed the correctness of Lenin's prevision. In his social and imaginative thinking H. G. Wells proved to be less far sighted than Lenin with his revolutionary dream. G. Krzhizhanovsky, one of Lenin's closest associates who was perfectly familiar with the social and spiritual atmosphere of the post-revolutionary years, wrote the introduction to the Russian translation of *Russia in the Shadows*. This is what he said: "In his book H. G. Wells, an observant and experienced writer, paints a striking picture of the crash of old Russia and the economic dislocation in the country. He paints with bold brush strokes the scene of the towns lying in near ruins with the shop windows boarded up, the broken streets, and the hungry, ragged citizens. But the photographic accuracy of these descriptions is combined with feebly drawn generalisations and a failure to understand the strength and essence of a proletarian revolution. H. G. Wells only saw the hunger, the cold and the

¹ H. G. Wells *Russia in the Shadows* London p. 12.

² Ibid., p. 153.

devastation but beyond that he failed to see the upsurge in the people's creative energy an upsurge unprecedented in history and confidently guided by the Communist Party and Lenin our great leader and teacher "

For all the wealth of his imagination Wells was anyway a person who belonged to a different world and had different notions and ideals At the same time it would not be right to see only the sceptical side of his views of the future

The interest shown the world over in the Lenin and H G Wells theme is quite justified for it embodies the clash of two world outlooks the socialist, personified by Lenin the Kremlin dreamer , and the sceptical, personified by H G Wells and repeated in different variants throughout our epoch

'Come back and see what we have done in Russia in ten years time Lenin suggested to Wells who did come but only in 1934 He was staggered by the transformed look of the country achieved through the implementation of Lenin's great plans, and he was compelled to revise his opinion of the "Kremlin dreamer's" prevision His world outlook and his writings (especially the novel *Meanwhile*) clearly reflected the serious changes that had taken place in critical realist literature under the influence of processes engendered by the October Revolution and also the changes in the sentiments of intellectuals in many countries of the world

Lenin's interest in the works of such different foreign writers as Henri Barbusse Romain Rolland Anatole France, G B Shaw H G Wells Jack London and Upton Sinclair testifies to the breadth of his views on literature He always gave his ardent support to everything genuinely truthful, humane, honest and talented Lenin was opposed to any form of sectarianism in art and was against isolating the development of Soviet art from the forward movement of progressive culture in the rest of the world Lenin's injunction that there is no such thing as sectarianism in Marxism in the sense that it is a stilted restricted teaching which appeared somewhere off the main road along which world civilisation developed, remains as valid as ever today

The champions of Proletkult, LEF (Left Front of Art) and other "leftist" literary groupings tried very hard to establish vulgar sectarian notions about the methods of developing revolutionary art and its character and attempt ed to isolate Soviet writers from the general movement of

progressive literature in the world Lenin emphatically rejected these attempts which threatened to impoverish and distort the spiritual culture of the people

There was a direct connection between the close attention with which Lenin followed the careers of Henri Barbusse, Romain Rolland and a number of other progressive foreign authors and his sympathetic attitude to the work of the international literary group "Clarte" The group, started in 1919 on the initiative of Henri Barbusse included prominent progressive writers of different political and artistic views Among them there were Anatole France, Romain Rolland Paul Vaillant-Couturier, H G Wells, Thomas Hardy Stefan Zweig, and other well known authors What united them was their humane desire to struggle against the imperialist war, to combat hatred among men and to establish peace in the world The very name of the group "Clarte" spoke of the aim which its members pursued the noble aim of dispelling gloom and delusions, of fighting the blindness and the forces of darkness that divided and deceived nations, set them against one another and fanned hatred It was in this spirit that Henri Barbusse defined the programme of the group in the manifesto entitled *La lueur dans l'abime* The manifesto called on writers scientists and artists to shed their indifference, forget their hatreds and join the ranks of the champions of the new world

From Lenin's attitude to the "Clarte" group we see how the revolutionary process influenced the minds of people engaged in literature and art Writers always came to embrace the ideas of revolution and socialism in their own individual way, and each instance differed from the next, largely depending on the manner in which the writer's career had shaped

The historical experience gained by a nation and the range of its vital problems are of decisive importance for the development of national art Writers in many countries were converted to the revolutionary world outlook by the horrors of the First World War and the untold sufferings it brought to people Lenin closely followed the mounting anti-militarist sentiments in the works of foreign authors In a note to his secretary, dated January 2, 1920, he asked for books and brochures in all the languages of a wholly Left-socialist and communist directedness, the most impor

tant'ones on the results of the war, on economics politics etc And also novels and stories about the war ¹

The reason for Lenin's constant and purposeful interest in literature concerning the First World War was that it showed the reaction of the masses and the intellectuals to the grim lesson taught by this war and as it revealed the essence of capitalism it helped to pave the way to the adoption of revolutionary ideas

Lenin wrote to the Clarté group in 1922

Dear Friends,

I take this opportunity to send you best greetings I have been seriously ill, and for over a year I have not been able to see a single one of the productions of your group I hope that your organisation '*des anciens combattants*' still exists and is growing stronger not only numerically but also spiritually in the sense of intensifying and spreading the struggle against imperialist war It is worth devoting one's whole life to the struggle against this kind of war it is a struggle in which one must be ruthless and chase to the furthestmost corners of the earth all the sophistry that is uttered in its defence

Best greetings

Yours,

Lenin ²

Owing to the heterogeneity of its composition the Clarté group did not last long Very soon there emerged two sharply differing views on the purpose of art one was the clear-cut stand adopted by writers like Henri Barbusse, and the other was a vaguely humanistic platform On the whole, however the group was a progressive one the majority of its members honestly struggled against imperialism, war and social oppression and promoted the principles of peace and social justice All of them came out in protest against the attempts of the interventionists to strangle the young Soviet Russian republic

The organic fusion of progressive ideas and a realistically truthful depiction of life in literature was attained as a result of strenuous seekings Speaking of the beneficial influence of progressive thinking on art, Nikolai Dobrolyubov wrote The writer who is guided by correct principles in his

¹ Lenin Miscellany XXIV p 311 (in Russian)

² V I Lenin Collected Works Vol 33 p 434

general ideas has the advantage over the undeveloped or wrongly developed writer in that he can follow the dictates of his artistic nature with greater freedom. Reality is then more vividly and evocatively reflected in his work which may bring a thinking person to the correct conclusions and, consequently, prove a factor of importance in life.¹

At the same time Dobrolyubov wrote that in his day literature had not yet come to where revolutionary ideas could be embodied in realistic imagery. A free embodiment of the loftiest abstractions in living images and at the same time a complete comprehension of the highest universal meaning in the most incidental personal fact of life, makes the ideal fusion of science and poetry never achieved by anyone yet.²

Very often in the past the contradictions in the social conditions led to a disparity between the writer's notions of reality and reality itself. Both Marx and Engels remarked on the contradiction between the political views of the writer and the pictures he painted of life to be found in many books. Socialist literature has overcome this contradiction. The ideological positions and the subjective aspirations of a Soviet writer are inseparable from the truth of life because his own world outlook corresponds to the objective laws governing the development of life.

The combination of these qualities is a new feature common to the literature of socialist realism which is based on the changing reality, on the objective laws and trends of its development, and on the life and work experience of the masses.

¹ N. A. Dobrolyubov *Collected Works* Vol. II p. 49 (in Russian)

² Ibid.

III

THE PRINCIPLE OF PARTISANSHIP IN LITERATURE

LITERATURE APPRECIATED BY MILLIONS

The mission of literature is to encourage and help people in their spiritual development, to show them the prospects of society's historical advance, and to assist them in building up a new and better life. It is quite natural therefore, that the position from which a writer depicts life becomes a question of major consideration. And this explains the importance which Marxist Leninist aesthetics attributes to partisanship in literature.

Lenin gave a Marxist substantiation to the principle of unity in the cognitive, aesthetical and society transforming functions of art, which in reactionary ideology has always been separated and placed in opposition to one another. Marxist aesthetics examines all these concepts in their complexity and their links. Lenin clarified the interconnection between such concepts as devotion to communist ideals, partisanship and populism in art. The meaning of each of these concepts is clearly defined in his works and the distinctions between them are as clearly elucidated.

Besides developing such old concepts as realism, devotion to ideals and to one's people in art, Lenin introduced and established in the sphere of literary criticism a number of new theoretical concepts, in the first place the principle of partisanship. *The Leninist principle of partisanship in literature is the highest form of dedication to the people, the fullest expression of the militant strength of the progressive-minded writers' convictions who consciously and openly devote their talent to the people and the cause of socialism.*

None of Lenin's predecessors or contemporaries had given such prominence to the necessity of enriching the spiritual

world of the oppressed and ignorant masses and introducing them to all the existing cultural values. In his draft programme of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party in 1902, Lenin called the autocracy the bitterest and most dangerous enemy of the proletarian emancipation movement and the cultural development of the entire people"¹ Already in this document he advanced the idea of free cultural development of the people as one of the chief aims of the struggle for their emancipation.

Lenin interpreted partisanship as the duty of every person to directly and openly adopt the standpoint of a definite social group in any assessment of events"²

His assertion that no one can help siding with one or another class, rejoicing in the given class's success, sorrowing over its failures and resenting its enemies applies to the sphere of literature and art as well. The philosophy, political views, social stand and ideals of the artist are most fully revealed in the way he draws his generalisations and the manner in which he assesses and portrays reality.

The tragedy of many outstanding humanist writers of the past and present lies in the abstractedness of their ideal and their attempts to solve major social problems on an illusory plane of abstract thought and moral abstraction. The principle of partisanship draws the artist into active participation in the people's struggle for new, socialist forms of life.

The principle of partisanship in literature develops and enriches Russian and world progressive thought.

In their statements on the socialist tendentiousness in revolutionary works of art, Marx and Engels voiced many of the basic propositions of which our concept of partisanship in literature is compounded. Rejecting those theories which upheld the "uninvolvement" of the artist, Marx and Engels consistently laid the foundations of the principle of partisanship. This principle was logically elaborated and further developed by Lenin in conditions of aggravated class struggle.

The distinctive features of socialist art are defined with great perspicacity in the works of Marx and Engels. They predicted the emergence of an art which, based on the expe-

¹ V. I. Lenin *Collected Works* Vol. 6 p. 29

² *Ibid.* Vol. 1 p. 401

rience of revolutionary struggle would in the new social conditions further develop the finest traditions of the past, reflect the birth of the new, socialist era, and produce works of art that would combine ideological depth and historical truth with truly Shakespearean vigour and impact. The idea of great socialist art intended for the masses was not conceived as an abstraction: it originated in times immemorial and embodied the hopes and dreams of the greatest thinkers of the past. Let us recall William Morris, the English writer who wrote as far back as 1872 that genuine art is man's expression of his joys in labour. Morris foresaw the appearance of a new, profoundly democratic art, a new art, a glorious art made by the people and for the people, as a happiness to the maker and the user.¹ And it would be the only genuine art, the only art that would make a weapon of progress in the world.

In Russia the comprehension of the concept of partisanship was prepared by the development of revolutionary literature and literary criticism by Belinsky and then by Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov. It was under the influence of what these revolutionary democrats preached that literary criticism assumed a place of exceptional importance in the life of society. They empowered the writer to teach society and compelled society to heed what the writer said. Some of the great Russian writers, Lev Tolstoi among them, failed to see the meaning of Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov's endeavour and treated them with disfavour. But the meaning of Tolstoi's own ideological seekings would be inexplicable without it.

Significantly Lenin links the importance of Russian literature for the world with the ideas of the most advanced party guided by the most advanced theory having in mind such predecessors of Russian Social Democracy as Herzen, Belinsky, Chernyshevsky and the Russian revolutionaries of the 1870s.

The principle of partisanship in Russian literature was already apparent, as Lenin indicates, in the works of the revolutionary democrats. But in their day the political class struggle in Russia had not yet reached that stage of development where the modern meaning of the concept could

¹ W. Morris, *On Art and Socialism: Essays and Lectures* (London, 1947), p. 139.

he fully defined Nikolai Dobrolyubov the great Russian revolutionary democrat, declared in 1858 that literature was not yet considered an essential part of life and in this connection he wrote "It does not matter to anybody whether literature serves any parties and what parties exactly whether it speaks in favour of anything or in protest against something" ¹ He bitterly regretted that literature had not the most needed party to serve a party of the people

Lenin provided the answers to the questions which worried progressive social thought, and expressed the ideal of literature which had matured in the most progressive circles of Russian society fostered by the writers who had dedicated their talent to the struggle for the interests of the people. The ideal, as formulated by Lenin showed that as socialist revolution matured the party of the people assumed its leading position in literature

The term "partisanship" found its application in literature and art much earlier, at the beginning of the 19th century, in fact Immanuel Kant debating the idea of involvement, of partisanship in artistic tastes in his *Kritik der Urteilskraft* tried to prove the remoteness of art from social problems. "Everyone must agree," he declared, "that any judgement of beauty if it is even slightly interested, is very partisan and is by no means a pure judgement of taste. Therefore one must not be interested in the existence of the thing and be completely indifferent in this sense" ²

However, before Lenin the term "partisanship" was used in a different sense and it carried an entirely different theoretical and historical meaning. It was mainly interpreted in the sense of the artist's subjective partiality or just sheer utilitarianism

Writing in the *Sovremennye Zapiski* (Contemporary Notes) in 1847, Belinsky commented ironically on this narrow minded view of a writer's partisanship, on the vulgar claim to interpret it as synonymous of a prejudiced preconceived world outlook, incompatible with the objective absolute truth. When speaking of literary parties, he also had in mind the political powers of his day that backed these parties. He ridiculed the writers who imagined that by

¹ N. A. Dobrolyubov *Collected Works*, Vol. I, Moscow 1934 p. 214 (in Russian)

² Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, Leipzig 1948 S. 41

flaunting their uncommitment to any party they could convince anyone of their impartiality and freedom from prejudice. Belinsky called such writers who had no convictions and no firm opinion of their own, either indifferent or apathetic. A claim to party affiliation always coincides with the claim to be the only one to clearly see the absolute truth at which all the others look through the dim glasses of biased partiality, but pure absolute truth is only a logical abstraction every *live* truth always bears the imprint of something temporal, conditional.¹

Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov ruthlessly condemned the hypocrisy of the bourgeois ideologists above party pose.

Already in these differences of opinion on partisanship in literature maintained by the revolutionary-democratic and liberal bourgeois theoretists, we can see the beginning of those basic ideological contradictions which became most clearly evident at the beginning of this century growing especially aggravated in our day and making the dividing line in modern literature.

At the new turning point in history, Lenin gave a new, scientifically grounded definition of partisanship in literature, calling it a historical necessity and the highest expression of ideological devotion, of fidelity to the truth of life and of the transforming power of art.

The Leninist principle of partisanship in literature ensures a richer spiritual life for the masses and makes the treasures of great art available to the millions of working people. The story of how the article *Party Organisation and Party Literature* came to be written is proof enough. Examination of historical facts shows that the main theses set out in this article were by no means dictated by the desire to criticise a group of undisciplined Menshevik minded writers as alleged in some books and articles, but stemmed from the entire system of Lenin's views on the development of modern culture. He developed these theses in the course of his polemics with bourgeois views which, in effect, denied the people access to artistic values. The main purpose of *Party Organisation and Party Literature* was to establish the socialist ideal of a free literature, openly linked with the masses and with the ideas of socialism, and opposed

¹ V. G. Belinsky, *Collected Works* Vol. X Moscow, 1956 p. 92 (in Russian)

to bourgeois literature intended for the bored "upper ten thousand"

The content of this article and the story of its writing give us reason to think that Lenin had already read Mach's *Erkenntnis und Irrtum* (just published in Vienna in 1905) and was very clearly voicing his disapproval of it especially of Mach's interpretation of the ways of development of mankind's spiritual culture of literature and art. Reference to the "upper ten thousand" was made in this book where Mach spoke of the problem of culture.

The point here is not so much in Lenin's polemic use of an expression taken from Mach as in his rejection of the whole bourgeois Machist theory of the development of world culture and in his placing of the party ideal of free socialist art in direct opposition to this theory. In the chapter entitled "Development of Individuality in a Natural and Cultural Environment" Mach wrote that the advancement of culture is thinkable only if there is a certain social inequality and, in the main, can only be promoted by people of means. This refers to both material and spiritual culture.

Art and science, wrote Mach, every legal and ethical culture that is any higher spiritual culture, can only develop in social alliance only where one part of society shoulders the hardships of the other. Let the 'upper ten thousand' clearly understand what they owe the working people. Let the artists and researchers remember that what they have before them is mankind's *common and commonly acquired* wealth and that they are governing it and multiplying this enormous wealth *for mankind*.¹ Mach accompanied these statements with vague philanthropical wishes which were, in effect, an acknowledgement of the inevitability of a perpetual division of society into scholars, artists and higher intellectuals on the one hand and on the other, the masses in their millions who serve the former as a support but who, owing to the natural and undefeatable division of society, remain outside the sphere of higher spiritual activity which is the province of the chosen few, the 'upper ten thousand'.

While acknowledging the importance of the masses' endeavour for the development of the arts but couching this acknowledgement in a few compassionate terms of a general

¹ Ernst Mach *Erkenntnis und Irrtum. Skizzen zur Psychologie der Forschung* Leipzig 1905 S. 84

nature Mach actually alienates the masses from higher spiritual activity artistic endeavour in particular and assigns to them the passive role of building the material base for the chosen creators of the higher values This alienation of the people from artistic creativity is featured as an essential condition or a law of cultural development

Countering the bourgeois concept of creative freedom, Lenin developed a revolutionary programme of struggle for the introduction of the masses to all the spiritual and artistic values created by mankind, and for the infusion of art and literature with the lofty ideals of serving the people Therefore the origin of the principle of partisanship lies in Lenin's words "Art belongs to the people"

Freeing the artists from the power of the money bags, venal morals careerism and anarchic individualism, and encouraging the spiritual growth of the working masses, were the essential conditions for the development of art in a socialist society as Lenin saw it To counter literary careerism, anarchism and individualism Lenin proposed developing a genuinely free literature frankly linked with the people and based on ideas of scientific socialism a literature that would serve those millions of workers who form the flower of the country its strength and its future" He saw in the people a living spring from which the artist would draw his inspiration, strength and genuine freedom to create

< The problem of the further development of culture, literature and art became especially acute in the period of reaction when questions of ideology came to the forefront Lenin's views on the solution of this problem were opposed to those of foreign ideologists like Mach and also the concepts of Russian liberals decadents and *Smena Vekh* champions The representatives of all these trends, irrespective of their distinctions tried to prove the destructive nature of broad revolutionary movements and the inability of the proletariat and the masses as such to play an independent role in the development of a country's political life and culture N Berdyaev for one made an attempt to substantiate these views in his article "Revolution and Culture" published in *Polyarnaya Zvezda*, 1905-1906, No 5, pp 12

His arguments are aimed against Lenin's and Gorky's articles in the newspaper *Novaya Zhizn* He links Lenin's Party Organisation and Party Literature and his prin

ciple of partisanship with Gorky's literary works and public writings, in particular with his observations on philistinism. As do the present day opponents to the principle of linking literature with the spiritual life of the people so did Berdyaev see artistic freedom only in the artist's individualistic isolation and his withdrawal from the vital problems of his historical epoch.

Time has confirmed the correctness of Lenin's view on decadent literary-critical screechings. Berdyaev and other opponents of partisanship in literature have exposed themselves as the servants of spiritual reaction and the enemies of culture for the masses.

Much that is erroneous, tendentious and often malicious has been said about the clear political position of the Soviet writers which is based on the principle of partisanship in literature. Among the foreign critics who dislike Soviet literature there is a great many who adore complicating, obscuring and distorting this position. Lenin had given the simplest and most accurate definition of the meaning of art's connection with politics. Considering the question from the point of view of politics, he said means considering it from the point of view of millions of people and the relations between millions.¹ Rejecting all vulgar interpretations of the very concept of politics, Lenin pointed out that the political position of a progressive artist implied in the first place, his assimilation and representation of processes and events from the standpoint of someone who champions the interests of the masses.

Lenin wrote of the socialist literature of the future. It will be a free literature because the idea of socialism and sympathy with the working people, and not greed or careerism will bring ever new forces to its ranks.²

In order to appreciate the article *Party Organisation and Party Literature* in all its wealth of content notice must be taken of one essential aspect which has not been dealt with yet by literary critics, namely its connection with a number of basic propositions most fully developed in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*.

The essence of the principle of partisanship and the publication of *Party Organisation and Party Literature*,

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works* Vol 29 p 542.

² *Ibid*, Vol. 10 p 48

are frequently examined in isolation from Lenin's other important work done in that period, in particular from his philosophical theoretical-cognitive works *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* above all. And yet the interrelationship of the principles of artistic truth and partisanship—these two basic and inseparable principles of Lenin's aesthetics—is in fact disclosed in the very process of writing these two classical works.

If we take this problem historically, we shall find irrefutable facts confirming the close connection between the writing of *Party Organisation and Party Literature* and *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* in which the positions of Lenin's theory of reflection are fully developed. For instance, in *Party Organisation and Party Literature* Lenin debated some of the propositions set out in Mach's book *Erkenntnis und Irrtum* which had just been published. The content of Lenin's article, born of the system of his views, is organically linked with the range of ideas later developed in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. He conceived his critical attitude to Machism and his intention to give battle to the latest forms of subjective idealism long before he got down to work on this book. There are serious grounds for concluding that the article was a sort of prologue to *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, the beginning of Lenin's struggle against Machism. At the same time, his concept of partisanship in art became crystallised in the course of his polemics with Machism as he elaborated the main propositions of his theory of reflection.

In *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* there is a section entitled "Parties in Philosophy and Philosophical Blockheads" where Lenin developed the basic propositions set out earlier in the article "Party Organisation and Party Literature", mainly from the angle of theoretical research which is particularly essential for a correct understanding of the nature of creative endeavour. Lenin gives prominence to the theoretical elucidation of the principle of partisanship and the concept of ideology as the unity of objectivity and tendentiousness. He explains socialist partisanship as the highest form of scientific objectivity, stemming as it does from the imperative coincidence of ideology with the aspect of phenomena and the objective course of history.

In the light of this historical perspective we appreciate and see more clearly the purpose of Lenin's struggle, in the

years immediately following the Great October Revolution against Proletkult and Futurism in order to embark the young Soviet literature on the right course of development. He unconditionally refuted the pseudo-romantic, abstract theories of Bogdanov the Futurists and their like and ruthlessly criticised their sectarian isolation from the real course of history. In contrast to the abstract programmes of Proletkult and LEF Lenin drew the writers and artists' attention to the main features of the rapidly developing revolutionary reality.

At recent literary discussions much attention has been devoted to the interpretation of Lenin's principle of partisanship. Whereas progressive writers find in it a source of inspiration and strength the ideologists of reaction and revisionism attack it and distort its meaning.

Any attempts to judge of partisanship in literature as isolated from Lenin's general programme of struggle for the socialist transformation of society for bringing the entire wealth of culture within reach of the masses and for their right to enjoy and participate in real art, will inevitably be one-sided, impoverishing the essence of Lenin's views.

The historical method must always be used in the sphere of the social sciences and when making a scientific analysis of the contents of Lenin's article "Party Organisation and Party Literature" the first thing to do is to establish the concrete reasons for its appearance its place in the political and literary life of the time its past and contemporary significance and to make a clear distinction between statements referring to phenomena of that given time and general propositions which remain as valid in our present day.

Many phenomena treated of in this article have become past history, but the main propositions and problems are as topical today.

Lenin's proposition that literature must become part of the Party cause has a far-reaching meaning incomparably wider than those narrow interpretations given it in the works of some literary researchers. We all remember those vulgar attempts to present a formal affiliation to the Party as the chief sign of the writer's partisanship. In his article Lenin wrote about the need to make a given group of anarchic-minded writers Social Democrats obey the Party line. But as applicable to literature in general, the matter

concerns the sum total of spiritual values and ideas promulgated by the Party

The cause of the Party means the entire life of the people, it embraces problems of vital concern to mankind calls for an active and conscious attitude to these problems, and infuses the work of the artist with purpose conviction and the fighting spirit of a champion of socialism Here we find an indication as to the manner in which we should tackle the main problems of modern literature in their relationship with the processes taking place in contemporary reality

A summing up should be made of the dispute which went on for several years about whether the article "Party Organization and Party Literature" had a purely inner-Party political character or whether it implied a wider circle of literary phenomena

Most of the researchers insist that the article is of general significance and is not confined to the concrete phenomena it deals with or the time of its writing alone However a number of authors tried to establish their allegation that the article wholly concerned inner Party matters and was aimed only at concrete persons of that given time Some regarded it as simply a historical document of narrowly restricted significance with no relation whatsoever to modern developments in literature Josip Vidmar a Yugoslav critic and Gyorgy Lukacs a Hungarian literary historian were among those who denied the general principled character of the article In their opinion it concerned a narrow circle of publishing interests in pre-revolutionary Russia and lost its validity after the victory of the Socialist Revolution

The article's alleged remoteness from general problems of literature is contradicted by the actual content of the article First of all, we must bear in mind the words addressed by Lenin directly to writers, artists and actors It is not accidental that his appeal to the writer the artist and the actress and his words about their dependence on the money bags in capitalist society directly follow the lines where he speaks of the vital necessity for literature to be freed from the thralldom of bourgeois-commercial relations

It is quite true that the article had a definite inner Party purpose and dealt with a number of concrete facts in the history of Russian and foreign Social Democratic press

It was aimed against the anarchic conduct of Matrov, Axelrod, Trotsky, Potresov, Parvus and Plekhanov. But there are no grounds for limiting the interpretation of this article to one side of the question only. In speaking out against the anarchic-minded writers who belonged to the Social Democratic Party, Lenin did not stop at this inner Party issue but gave his opinion on many complex problems of literature and art which were as topical in those days as they are now.

Lenin wrote his article on a definite subject at a definite time, but his theoretical propositions are of fundamental importance for artistic endeavour in all its various spheres. Therefore we cannot approve of any attempts to narrow down its significance and relegate it to the pre-revolutionary period.

The problems he developed with his amazing perspicacity included 'Literature and the Masses', 'Literature and Socialism', 'The Stand and Mission of the Artist' and 'Freedom of Creative Endeavour'.

THE STAND OF THE WRITER

The article 'Party Organisation and Party Literature' deals with all the most complex problems involved in literary endeavour, but most essentially with the principle of partisanship and the concept of the progressive artist, his place in life, the nature and purpose of his activity.

In his interpretation of the writer's civic and aesthetic mission from positions of scientific socialism, Lenin developed the views of the world's revolutionary democratic and progressive thinkers. His opponents, past and present, accused and still accuse him of biased political speculativeness. In actual fact, by advancing the principle of partisanship Lenin was responding to the vital demands of the advance of literature.

If we turn to the history of Russian literature we shall see that denial of the social and moral responsibility of the artist did, in fact, form the basis of all the manifestos and other programme compositions proclaimed by the decadent trends which sprouted so vigorously late in the 19th and early in the 20th century. Suffice it to mention N. Minsky's 'In the Light of Conscience' and D. Merezhkovsky's 'On the

Causes of Decline and On New Trends in Modern Russian Literature"

Opinions on the mission of the artist in modern society clash in our day, too. The champions of modernism categorically reject the classical understanding of the artist's role and his civic functions, calling it an outdated "syndrome" — a romantic notion of the artist not as a professional "doer" but as a prophet or a spokesman for his times and art as a sort of obsolete form of self-dramatisation: the author's personal assimilation of the experience of mankind. It is in this spirit that Victor Erlich, an American literary critic, examines the history of Slavic poetry in his book *The Double Image: Concepts of the Poet in Slavic Literatures* (Baltimore, 1964). The book includes articles on Pushkin, Blok, Bryusov, Mayakovsky and Pasternak. Denial of the great, human, prophetic and socially ethical mission of poetry — that "archaic romantic syndrome" based on the "self-dramatisation" of the creative personality — is the position from which all these poets are examined. The concept of the artist's civic mission is unacceptable for the author of the book because this concept contains the historical beginnings of the principle of partisanship in literature.

Polemising with Soviet literary critics, Victor Erlich tries to show Pushkin's indifference to politics and his taste for perfectly pure poetry. Erlich points out that Pushkin changed his views on the role of the poet again and again while his pluralism remained a constant trait. And although his poetry did reflect a desire for a civic role, still, as the author says, referring to Arion, Pushkin remained an outsider even in relation to the Decembrists. But no matter how often he changed his social sympathies, he was always faithful to poetry, to poetry alone, and it was in fact the free play of his creative imagination that remained the focus of his firm beliefs. The chapter ends with the conclusion that the autonomy of art, creative freedom — this when all is said and done is the central article of Pushkin's faith, the principal element of consistency in this magnificently inconsistent heritage, the only coherent message which emerges from Pushkin's polyphonic meta-poetry.¹

¹ Victor Erlich *The Double Image: Concepts of the Poet in Slavic Literatures* p. 34

The mission of Blok Bryusov, Mayakovsky and Pasternak appears typical to Erlich not just for a criticism of this romantic syndrome in the 20th century but also in connection with another important modern dilemma literature and revolution, literature and politics

Analysing the views on the function of the poet maintained by Bryusov Blok Mayakovsky and Pasternak, the author of *The Double Image* tries to convince the reader of the destructive effect of the Revolution and the establishment of socialism with its new notions of the artist's mission, which had so disastrously influenced the careers of these poets

Using Mayakovsky as an example Erlich attempts to prove that serving the revolution and political aims was detrimental to avantgarde poetry and poetry in general

And vice versa Pasternak who unlike the romantics who believed the mission of a poet was to be a prophet or a rebel, wanted to be a poet only and to indulge in the delights of word weaving alone But it was precisely this dogged self absorption this striving to preserve his individuality and this renunciation of the poet's prophetic mission that turned Pasternak into a public figure For Pasternak, according to Erlich poetry was more than imitation or a recreation of the given it was his co-creator of existence, a catalyst of reality

Speaking of socialist art Lenin gave prominence to a new type of artist, who would be wholly involved in the life of the masses and who would consciously dedicate his art to the cause of enriching the spiritual world of the working people and satisfying their aesthetical needs This new type of artist has taken the lead in modern art, and is the determinant of its progressive forces, innovation and the character of its ideals and seekings

Reactionary decadent intellectuals always turned away from the masses haughtily believing them incapable of assimilating the higher spiritual values and utterly lacking in aesthetical requirements Contrarily, progressive democratic intellectuals always strove to come closer to the masses, to improve their life, and to share with them all the riches of culture

The article Party Organisation and Party Literature and Lenin's other works contain the answer to the question which has been tormenting literature for many long decades

how to achieve a merger of the intellectuals with the masses? Seekings of an effective solution to this question became especially intensified towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. In that period the course of history had made the glaring discrepancy between the intellectuals and the spiritually destitute masses more obvious than ever.

Rather wide circles of the intelligentsia, for example the Tolstoians and the Narodniks suggested such utopian solutions as renouncing all cultural values and adapting themselves to the level of the backward natural peasant mentality. Some writers, who sincerely sympathised with the masses but did not believe their lot was possible to improve went even farther. Since the masses were oppressed and ignorant and the intellectuals had not the power to help them, they had to renounce their ideals, dissolve themselves in the masses and accept all their vices and diseases.

It would be anti-historical to assume that all these utopian and reactionary suggestions belonged only to the later Narodniks and the Tolstoians. These notions were also developed in other variants by past and present writers. Thus, when Leonid Andreyev lost faith in the possibility of liberating the working people the revolutionary way, after the defeat of the 1905 Revolution, he arrived at the conclusion that the intellectuals had no right to be good, instead they must adjust themselves to the level of the backward strata to put out the lights and plunge into gloom. A similar desire for the intellectuals to become dissolved in the masses is common to a number of modern literary trends, for instance to the existentialists.

Lenin harshly criticised the idea of achieving a fusion of the intelligentsia and the masses by the former renouncing the gains of culture and reverting to primitive living, both physically and spiritually.

Serving the people, Lenin said, did not by any means imply adapting oneself to backwardness. On the contrary, it implied spiritually enriching the masses, raising their cultural level and developing their socialist mentality.

* * *

Holding a truthful representation of reality to be the basis of literature, Lenin developed his ideas on the trans-

formative function of art whose imagery would help to shape people's mentality. In Lenin's works, literature is treated as one of the most active forms of man's spiritual activity, a mighty force that promotes the progress of history.

He repeated again and again how foreign it was to Marxism to make a fetish of the objective laws of development, or to assert the helplessness of people against the inevitable. In its philosophical essence, Soviet literature is opposed to any theories which preach that the course of history is pre-determined and the fate of man and mankind is predestined. Asserting the creative role of the masses orients the writers to intensify the educative influence of literature and to intervene ever more actively in the life of the masses. We see this in the work of those authors who follow the principle of partisanship: who write for the people and who serve the noble aim set before them by Lenin to unite the feelings, thoughts and will of these masses, and to elevate them.¹

The theme of partisanship in the sphere of artistic endeavour presupposes first of all the artist's social and aesthetic effort aimed at promoting the influence of art, and is organically linked with the growing social and spiritual participation of people in consciously making history.

Partisanship in all spheres of endeavour is an expression of the individual's spiritual and social activity, his full awareness of his aims and aspirations and his ability to achieve them. In this sense, partisanship is a broad principle that extends far beyond the sphere of art. It is, in fact, a principle of life: a state of mind of people in the modern age of the establishment of socialism.

The range of ideas and problems contained in "Party Organisation and Party Literature" is organically linked with the content of Lenin's other works of that period. It must not be examined in isolation from his other writings, considering that in 1905 alone Lenin raised the problem of partisanship in a number of other articles. Learn from the Enemy, Revolutionary Office Routine and Revolutionary Action, Socialism and Anarchism, The Socialist Party and Non-Party Revolutionism. The concept of partisanship is elucidated in its different aspects as applicable to differ

¹ "V. I. Lenin on Literature and Art" p. 660 (in Russian)

ent spheres of activity political social ideological and aesthetical Lenin counterposes partisanship to non partisanship, to political and ideological amorphousness to vagueness of stands and convictions, and indifference to social struggle

The concept of partisanship is related to other definitions used in socialist art say ideological fidelity , but it has its own distinctive features and its own special meaning As formulated by Lenin partisanship means the artist s clearly expressed social and creative stand it is an intercrossing of theory and practice, thought and action the individual and society, the ideal and the realisation thereof conviction and emotion In other words the moment of particular importance is the transition of the idea into accomplishment, with the individual lending his spiritual strength to the task of implementing these ideas

That is why the problem of partisanship in the sphere of art is simultaneously a social and an aesthetical problem

Lenin held that an active, transformative quality was contained in the philosophico-aesthetical foundations of revolutionary art Idea and action were inseparable concepts for him He writes "Man s consciousness not only reflects the objective world but creates it " Explaining this thought he says. The world does not satisfy man and man decides to change it by his activity ¹

The materialist theory of reflection emphasises the active role of thinking in the process of cognition and transformation of the world The activity of man who has formed for himself an objective picture of the world, changes the outward reality, destroys its definiteness (changing this or that aspect, or quality) and in this manner takes away its seemingness appearance and insignificance making it a world in itself a world existing for itself (that is, objectively authentic) ²

In the light of Lenin s emphasis on the transformative function of art in reflecting life all those accusations of passivity and flat illustrativeness made against the materialist theory of art appear glaringly groundless For instance John Dewey an American philosopher rebukes the materialist theory of artistic endeavour for identifying

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works* Vol 38 pp 212 213

² *Lenin Miscellany* IX p 250

the meaning of art with its objective material. On the contrary the materialist theory of reflection is active in its creative essence and unites knowledge and action. Books, films and plays actively influence the spiritual essence of the individual. And this influence may be either beneficial or harmful. Maxim Gorky discloses this active function of art in a variety of aspects. Of particular interest is his formula on education through truth which expresses the effectiveness of progressive art. It is the guiding principle of socialist art in all its spheres. Art shapes the inner world of the individual and the spiritual life of society by truthfully interpreting and rendering the processes taking place in the world in the destinies of man and mankind.

After receiving the Nobel Prize in Stockholm Mikhail Sholokhov made a speech in which he described the distinctive, novel characteristics of literature born of the October Revolution and the establishment of socialism. The real avantgarde, he said, were the writers who rendered in their works the new meaning and the new essential traits of life in our century. Realism as a whole and realistic novels must be based on new, profoundly modern traits.

I mean realism which propagates the idea of renovating life, reconstructing it for the good of man. I mean realism which we now call socialist realism. It is unique in that it expresses a world outlook that does not admit either contemplativeness or a withdrawal from reality, but on the contrary calls for struggle to promote the progress of mankind and to attain the goals desired by millions of people, and lights up the path in this struggle.

In his own way Sholokhov develops Gorky's main idea of the mission of progressive writers.

Speaking at the First All Union Congress of Soviet Writers Gorky said: Socialist realism asserts life as action as creative endeavour, the aim of which is to constantly develop the finest individual abilities of man for his triumph over the forces of nature, for his health and longevity for the great happiness of living on this earth which he wants to cultivate in conformity with his constantly growing requirements and make of it a beautiful home for mankind united into one big family.

Gorky's call for action with the aim of improving the world expresses the way he understood the concept of partisanship in literature.

He regarded the theme of work in the broad sense of the word as the principal theme of socialist realism. His words about the decisive role of work have a far broader socio-philosophical, ethical and aesthetical meaning than that which critics usually lend them. Gorky did not simply mean the process of creating material and spiritual values. He linked socialist art with a revolutionary, active attitude to life, with the transformation and elevation of the individual and with the development of a new, creative type of man with a new mentality.

Many of the major 20th century writers have remarked on the organic fusion of merciless truth and effective activity in Lenin's teaching. Romain Rolland, for instance, entitled his article 'Lenine l'art et l'action'. He wrote: 'He mobilises all the energies of the spirit: art, literature and science, for action, even to the most spontaneous impulses, even to the most subconscious depths of existence, even to dreams'. Further on he says: 'No illusions for Lenin! No escaping into illusion. He has a sense of reality, a powerful permanent sense'.¹

Advancing a new hero into the centre of life, a man who actually paves the way for the movement of history, is a distinctive trait of the new realism, of the new art. This is what Ralph Fox wrote in *The Novel and the People*: "The new Realism, it is our task to create, must take up the task where bourgeois realism laid it down. It must show man not merely critical, or man at hopeless war with a society he cannot fit into as an individual, but man in action to change his conditions, to master life, man in harmony with the course of history and able to become the lord of his own destiny".²

The problem of action, motives and purpose of man's activity has acquired special importance in present-day literature. The reasons differ greatly in character, and stem from the divergence of views on life and the purpose of living.

The champions of modern decadent trends are attempting to shift the problem of action into the channel of mistified one-sided decisions. As a rule, it is restricted to the seclusion of man's individual thinking, with no outlet into real,

¹ Romain Rolland *Compagnons de Route* Paris 1961 p. 223

² Ralph Fox *The Novel and the People* London 1937 p. 101

practical activity. Other writers take man's activity out of his circumscribed individual thinking but then they subordinate it to various illusory and often anti humanist aims. Lenin countered subjectivism with real activity of the individual embodied in creative work for the good of men. The creative principle of socialist aesthetics blends most organically with the objective laws of development of modern society and the individual. And therefore socialist aesthetics is the most effective and purposeful.

For many years, the attention of literary theorists have been focused on art as a one-sidedly perceived form of knowledge hardly examining the transformative influence of the artist's work in portraying reality. This attitude has largely been responsible for the contraposition of art as the reflection of definite aspects of life to art as action as a specific form of creating aesthetical and spiritual values.

This contraposition groundless as it is finds expression in a number of general theoretical works which accuse Marxism of inconsistency because its emphasis on the active approach to reality supposedly contradicts its interpretation of the development of society as a necessary and logical process. Thus it is stated in Karl Popper's book *The Poverty of Historicism* that materialist historicism is incompatible with Marx's thesis that history does not create anything by itself, that it is made by living men, and that in the final count history is the activity of people, accomplishing their aims. In Popper's opinion the teaching on the laws of history's development wholly contradicts the well known thesis on man actively changing the world. 'For as we now see we may say. The historicist can only interpret social development and aid it in various ways, his point, however, is that *nobody can change it*'.¹

Perceiving art one-sidedly as a reflection of life while forgetting its active, transformative essence, is not justified. Nor is it right to absolutise any one side of art in the given case its reflective function, losing sight of its other no less important aspect artistic endeavour as the specific activity of the writer who is a historically active personality.

The development of world literature and the conclusions drawn from the wide discussions of art and its problems

¹ K. Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism*, London, 1957, p. 52.

held in recent years call for a more detailed analysis of the problem of active and creative assimilation of art. Various shallow interpretations of this problem had obscured its essence to a large extent. In genuine art, knowledge and creativity, truthfulness and the author's subjective feeling cannot be separated.

Lenin wrote about the exceptional role of literature in raising the culture and the political awareness of the masses. When speaking of writers, he always defined their role in social development and the influence of their books, either good or harmful as the case might be, on the spiritual life of the people.

In the matter of shaping the socialist world outlook of progressive Russian society, a role of tremendous importance was ascribed by Lenin to the activities and writings of the revolutionary democratic authors: Belinsky, Herzen, Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov and Saltykov-Shchedrin. If it had not been for them, the revolutionary movement in Russia would not have developed as it did. Whole generations of freedom fighters were brought up on Belinsky's passionate appeal, Chernyshevsky's novel *What Is To Be Done?*, Dobrolyubov's exposure of the "reign of ignorance" and his prevision of a new hero in life and in literature, and Saltykov-Shchedrin's trenchant satire.

In Lenin's numerous comments on Gorky, one always notices that he treats the individual features of the writer's talent and the social significance of his works as an inseparable whole. The artistic merits of Gorky's books are praised together with the part these books (*Mother* especially) played in the Russian and world socialist movement. "With your gifts as an artist," he wrote, "you have rendered such a tremendous service to the working-class movement of Russia, and indeed not only of Russia."¹

Lenin assessed other works of literature from the point of view of their value to the spiritual development of the masses, and this is what he wrote to Serafimovich (A. S. Popov) in 1920: "Your books and what my sister has often told me have aroused a profound affection for you in me, and I very much want to say to you how *necessary* your work is for the workers and for all of us."²

¹ V. I. Lenin *Collected Works*, Vol. 34, p. 404.

² *Ibid.* Vol. 35, p. 448.

He put a world of meaning into the word "necessary" as applied to works of art of genuine spiritual value enriching the inner world of man, his intellect and his emotional capacity. There is nothing vulgar or narrowly utilitarian in these definitions which are most consistently applied at the present time in pragmatic theories on the nature and functions of art.

As everyone knows, the utilitarian point of view which turns truth to the service of its narrow requirements is a rather flat variant of the standard pragmatic constructions which ignore the objective meaning of developments and measure truth only by the extent to which it conforms with their attitudes and aims. Any development in literature which does not conform with this point of view contradicts the pattern if only slightly or does not fit into it is simply ignored or pushed out of sight. These utilitarian tendencies in literature and literary criticism and this contempt of facts necessitate a critical exposition to be made of the spreading pragmatic understanding of the truthfulness of art.

Pragmatism and all its variants (instrumentalism, personalism) find the most vivid expression of the human essence and truth in action. Truth is mainly measured by the extent to which it serves action and conforms to the practice of life. William James the American philosopher who is one of the founders of pragmatism states that the only acceptable truth is that which best guides us in our practical activity which is most useful in any sphere of life and which enables us to best adapt ourselves to the surrounding conditions and to attain our aims.

Whereas reactionary criticism dissociates art altogether from the process of cognising the truth, vulgar Leftist criticism unfairly contraposes artistic truth to action or education. In its primitive utilitarianism it merges with the pragmatic philosophical and aesthetical trends, the pragmatic schools are most consistently preaching the estrangement of artistic truth from the function of art to influence minds.

In our day and age too, writers must be inwardly armed against the various existing forms of narrow utilitarianism in their attitude to the nature and tasks of art. The more so since the historical crystallisation of the principles of art was accomplished not in ideal conditions, but in struggle,

contradictions and strenuous seekings Much that was oversimplified and prejudiced has been voiced allegedly in assertion of socialist realism It is all the more painful therefore to see the influence of such narrow and biased trends on the development of literatures in our day when historical experience has disclosed so much and when the entire spiritual life of our society has become more sophisticated and demanding

* * *

The Leninist principle of partisanship in art arises from the development of life itself Being profoundly comprehended and absorbed by the artist it historically becomes a powerful factor in the development of his creative endeavor Very often however this principle is given a subjectivistic and biased interpretation in books and articles by literary critics ignoring the artist's active participation in the life of his society and his profound knowledge of it

In the foreign press especially the question of partisanship in literature and art is given an erroneous and very often a hostile interpretation For the most part the principle is interpreted as an aggregate of directives foreign to the very nature of art which substitutes political problems for the artist's free vision of the world

The opponents of Marxism have built up a voluminous literature for the express purpose of "disproving" the Leninist principle of partisanship in ideology and "proving" its incompatibility with an objective judgement of reality Mention might be made of Johann Fischl's *Materialismus und Positivismus der Gegenwart* Max Lange's *Marxismus, Leninismus Stalinismus*, Innocent Bochenski's *Der sowjetrussische dialektische Materialismus (Diamat)*, and many others

According to the ideologists of the bourgeoisie the Marxist principle of partisanship means a denial of any sort of objectivity since ideology is regarded by the Communists as an active weapon in the struggle of the Party it cannot be objective The opponents of Marxism make an unsolvable dilemma of the relationship between partisanship and objectivity and declare that the open partisanship pronounced by Lenin wholly excludes objectively truthful judgement They declare that partisanship is utterly alien

to art More than that they see partisanship and a realistic objective reflection of life as mutually excluding opposites

The relationship between objectivity and partisanship is not an abstract academic problem The approach to this problem shows most revealingly the difference between socialist and bourgeois ideology The manner in which the relationship between objectivity and partisanship is interpreted is one of the most vital questions in modern intellectual life and has for many years been the subject of sharp polemics True to the tradition of classical aesthetics, Lenin proved the inseparable connection between the cognitive, transformative and educational tasks of progressive art

It is important for the development of modern literature to highlight Lenin's assertion of the organic connection between partisanship and truthfulness, and their interdependence in scientific aesthetics Genuinely Party literature must above all else be truthful it must be backed by real life's experience and follow the progressive movement of this life

Any violation of the truth any distortion of reality this implies embellishment as much as denigration will be a breach of the Leninist principle of partisanship because such a work of art will not be based on real life and will thus lose its revolutionary impact

The principle of partisanship is a creative active, stimulating force that propels literature forward It would be wrong to narrow it down to an illustration of practical tasks which come to the fore at one or another period of political life In its definite social trend the principle of partisanship is a broad spiritual and aesthetical category expressive of the writer's world outlook and his all-embracing artistic aspirations The present period in the history of Soviet society and its literature has proved most strikingly that this principle is a perfectly free expression of progressive writers' stand, and a natural bidding of their heart and mind

TREND AND CREATIVE FREEDOM

The thought that the principle of Party literature needed to be explained and embodied in all its fulness and integ

rity was consistently developed by Lenin in all his statements on literature and all his works dealing with the creation of a socialist culture and the organisation of a revolutionary press

Lenin held that it was imperative for any organ of the press be it a magazine or a newspaper to follow a clear political trend This view is of primary importance in literature and literary criticism Lenin maintained that for the Party to make a success of its educational work it absolutely had to have its own press with an ideologically consistent programme As everyone knows, for a time he was obliged to print his articles in such publications of the Legal Marxists as *Slovo* (1897-1898) and *Nachalo* (1899) He wrote with indignation and bitterness of their lack of a clear direction and their ideological discordance In a letter to A Potresov written in April 1899, he said "I do not forget of course that under Russian conditions it is impossible to demand of a journal that it admit some *Genossen* and exclude others but a journal like *Nachalo* is not an almanac, allowing Marxism just because it is the mode (à la *Mir Bozhii*, *Nauchnoye Obozreniye*, etc) but an organ of a definite trend ¹

The distinction drawn by Lenin between a journal an organ of a definite trend and an almanac is a tradition in the history of Russian social thought and literature Belinsky wrote "A journal must in the first place have its own face its character Nothing could be worse for it than an almanac's impersonality A journal's face and character are in other words, the direction it has taken, its opinion and the dominant teaching whose organ it must be ² A journal must have its definite political and artistic programme it must aspire to ideological leadership and must help to shape public opinion

While Belinsky the revolutionary critic, claimed that a journal had to disseminate progressive political ideas the reactionaries decadents and liberals in the early 1900s launched a noisy campaign against these traditions V Bulgakov and G Chulkov, known as the Knights of Liberal Verbosity, published articles in *Voprosy Zhizni* demand

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works* Vol 34 p 33

² V G Belinsky *Collected Works* Vol II Moscow 1953 p 46 (in Russian)

ing that journals should be freed from politics¹ and culture from the surveillance of politics² Similar demands were also published in the decadent journal *Vesy* and several other organs of the Constitutional Democrats

Lenin's correspondence with Gorky gives a more profound substantiation to the demand for a journal having a clear ideological trend Lenin wanted to start a section of literary criticism in such Party newspapers as *Proletary Zvezda Pravda* and the legal Party journal *Prosveshcheniye* with Gorky in charge He wrote "Ah there is nothing good about all those special, long articles of literary criticism scattered through various semi Party and non Party periodicals! We should try to take a step away from this old intellectual stuffed shirt manner that is, we should link literary criticism too *more closely* with Party work with Party leadership"³ In another letter dated November 22 1910 Lenin confirmed his opinion that a journal was a different thing altogether from the collections and almanacs which were trying to monopolise the best fiction writers Apart from fiction a journal had to give coverage to problems of politics, science history public life and most important of all to follow a definite ideological trend

Anti realistic aesthetics makes absolute the contradiction between the personality of the writer and the trend In a number of articles, lately published in the press the problem of the writer's personality was posed one-sidedly from the angle of the fatal contraposition of the stand maintained by the author and by the organ of the press, which means a definite range of social, philosophical and aesthetic principles and ideas implied by the concept of trend

The question can only be elucidated by determining what kind of position and what kind of trend it is As for the insistent attempts to equate any trend or point of view in art with "toeing the line" and speculativeness it is also a kind of stand, a specific, modern concept rather widespread and standard type at that

¹ *Voprosy Zhizni* 1905 No 2 p 354

² *Ibid* No 8 p 209

³ V I Lenin *Collected Works* Vol. 34 p 381

In dwelling on the character of the relationship between individuality' and trend' special mention should be made of the creative individuality of the socialist realist writer. If we take for example such outstandingly gifted people as Gorky, Mayakovsky, Brecht, Becher, Nezval, Vančura, Iwaszkiewicz and Broniewski, we shall see that their personalities are far more striking than those of modernist writers. A study of their careers will show that the adoption of a firm socialist stand allowed them to express their individualities with even greater eloquence and originality.

It is the link between individuality and the progressive trend that forms the objective social and ideological basis for correctly approaching phenomena in art and literature. It is in fact this trend that links the individual's personal experience and potentialities with the objective experience of mankind and enables the artist to give full expression to his inner creative urge. Without this broad objective and what might be termed universally human content, the limitations of individual and private experience inevitably condemn the individual, however brilliant his potentialities, to inner narrowness, to a specific kind of spiritual provincialism. Such limitations can only take art and criticism by devious by ways and peripheral routes of contemporary culture, channelling it into the rut of fashionable "universal aesthetic standards."

* * *

In his article "Party Organisation and Party Literature", Lenin states in full his views on freedom in art. The principle of Partyism is seen by Lenin as a real comprehensive and historically well founded expression of the artist's creative freedom. It is, above all, a position consciously adopted by the artist and which expresses his will, his choice, his sense of responsibility and his creative essence. There is no need to explain how Lenin's treatment of freedom in art touches on the most urgent problems of world philosophical and aesthetic thought.

Contemporary ideological reaction is making determined efforts to spread abroad the preconceived notion that Partyism, that is the artist's adoption of a definite standpoint, inhibits the full and natural development of the creative

individuality This tendentious version of the supposedly depersonalising influence of the Party convictions held by Soviet writers is being elaborated by certain foreign critics who even go so far as to instance the works of such indisputably great and in the highest degree, honest artists as Gorky Mayakovsky or Sholokhov

The revolution gave Mayakovsky a new and higher understanding and sense of creative freedom an understanding that was founded on an interpretation of the forward movement of life on mastery of the complex material of reality, on organic inclusion in the conscious creation of history He saw the true expression of creative freedom in his mission which was to serve the people in his capacity as poet and to help build the new socialist world I am a free man and a writer Materially I am not dependent on anybody But morally I belong to the revolutionary movement which is rebuilding Russia on the principle of social equality ¹ That is how Mayakovsky in a talk with the editor of the Polish newspaper *Polska Wolność* defined his position and his understanding of the revolutionary artist's freedom and mission

Refuting the falsifications put forward by the enemies of socialism Sholokhov gave a superb definition of the true Party artist's sense of inner freedom "Our maliciously inclined enemies abroad say of us Soviet writers that we write at the dictates of the Party The position is somewhat different each of us writes at the dictates of his own heart and our hearts belong to the Party and to our own people"²

The actual development of Soviet literature reveals the principle of Partyism in literature as the totally free creative expression of the inner being of progressive artists as a natural bidding of the heart The epic depiction of reality in Sholokhov's writings is combined with great accuracy in portraying the spiritual beauty of the heroes and the inexhaustible creative powers of the masses The development of the action is impressively convincing and natural The remarkable realism and honesty of the author's handling of the narrative refute outright any charges that

¹ V Mayakovsky *Collected Works* Vol 13 p 237 (in Russian)

² *Second All Union Congress of Soviet Writers* Official Records, Moscow, 1956 pp 377-378 (in Russian)

his talents are bound by preconceived systems of thought. The ideological and philosophical conclusions of the novels are the logical outcome of the contents of the entire work and of the whole previous experience of the characters.

The beginnings of an approach to the problem of 'the freedom of the artist' from the scientific socialist standpoint may be found in Marx and Engels. They considered the freedom of the artist in a society based on alienation of the individual as entirely relative and illusory, since the dominance of commodity market relations subordinates to itself the whole sphere of spiritual activity.

In Lenin the problem of the freedom of creative art is seen in the light of the new historical experience, when in world art, on the one hand, the processes of decadent disintegration had become vividly manifest and, on the other, commercial callousness and standardisation had taken more tangible form.

Exposing the myth of the artist's freedom in a capitalist society, Lenin declared: "There can be no real and effective freedom in a society based on the power of money, in a society in which the masses of working people live in poverty and the handful of rich live like parasites. Are you free in relation to your bourgeois publisher, Mr. Writer, in relation to your bourgeois public, which demands that you provide it with pornography in frames and paintings, and prostitution as a supplement to sacred scenic art? This absolute freedom is a bourgeois or an anarchist phrase (since, as a world outlook, anarchism is bourgeois philosophy turned inside out). One cannot live in society and be free from society. The freedom of the bourgeois writer, artist or actress is simply masked (or hypocritically masked) dependence on the money bag, on corruption, on prostitution."¹

Lenin's article, "Party Organisation and Party Literature", by openly posing the problem of creating a genuinely free socialist literature, aroused a storm of furious reactions in the bourgeois press. *Severnaya Zvezda* (Northern Star), *Vestnik Znaniya* (Herald of Knowledge), *Vesy* (Scales). Valeri Bryusov attacked from the decadent standpoint Lenin's summons for all that was talented and honourable in literature to join its destiny with the revolution, with

¹ V. I. Lenin *Collected Works*, Vol. 10, p. 48.

socialism with the people. In a series of irritated but unconvincing objections to Lenin's article in the form of a counter charge against the root of Social Democracy¹ Bryusov attacked Partyism in literature with the slogan "freedom of speech"² according to which art should be isolated from the political problems and ideas of the age.

Bryusov's highly unconvincing attack vividly showed up the anti-social nature of decadence and its lack of firm ties with the life of the people and with the national literature.

Lenin pointed out the anarchistic nature of Bryusov's attitude to the revolution and the individualistic meaning of his conceptions of the artist's mission. Lenin's attention was caught by Bryusov's poem "To My Own Kind" printed in the journal *Fakely* (Flambeaux). Addressing the destructive thunder and lightning forces of the revolution the poet declared: "Together we'll destroy but not construct." In his article, "When You Hear the Judgement of a Fool" Lenin quotes these concluding lines and describes the author as an anarchist poet.³

This description accurately conveys the meaning of Bryusov's "To My Own Kind", and also the journal's general tendencies, which were pretentiously described as 'mystical anarchism'. In a foreword outlining their policy the editors of this journal announced that *Fakely* does not represent any one integral trend. But a certain ideological line has already been perceived by us: we think we have taken our cue from the articles of those of our colleagues who base their anarchist ideas on the mystic interpretation of life.⁴

On this ideological platform, which combined individualistic anarchist moods with mysticism, Bryusov was aligning himself with the representatives of various trends in the ideological and literary crack-up. If however we turn to the underlying significance of "To My Own Kind", which attracted Lenin's attention, then we find that in many respects it is a poetic echo of a certain mystical anarchist ideas which were being evolved at the time by Georgy Chulkov, ideologist in-chief of *Fakely*. In his turn Chulkov and other mystical anarchists played a number of vari-

¹ *Vesy*, 1905, No. 11, p. 64.

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 11, p. 470.

³ *Fakely*, 1907, No. 1, p. 4.

ations in their journalism and literary work on the very propositions advanced by Bryusov in his poem Chulkov's article On the Affirmation of Individuality ends with a reiteration of the motifs in the closing lines of To My Own Kind Each moment we are there where the Revolution is But we do not only destroy we also create but our creation is wholly alien to the mechanical principle Our creativeness is the creativeness of love ¹

Bryusov was subsequently to admit the invalidity of his attacks on the principle of Partyism and he wrote of the exceptional impoverishment of art, of the distortion and shrinking of its outlook in the decadent movement The lessons of history together with his reason and feelings as a major artist compelled Bryusov to realise the indestructible humanist truth of Leninist Partyism

The ensuing historical development of world literature demonstrated even more vividly the validity of Lenin's standpoint, and exposed even further the real meaning behind the individualistic demands for freedom of art and their total isolation from the problems of social life

Lenin, with revolutionary sobriety and determination, showed up the deceptiveness of the corrupt notions concerning the freedom of creative art which had spread fairly widely among the intelligentsia, and which regarded such freedom as incompatible with a definite social standpoint on the writer's part, or with moral and civic responsibilities of any kind These were rejected by the adherents of this view of artistic freedom, who saw them as nothing more than violence done to the natural manifestation of the creative nature Innumerable versions of such views on the freedom of the artist's personality are also widely prevalent in our own times Most influential of all among the contemporary intelligentsia is the existentialist conception of freedom the claim that the freedom of man lies in the courageous acknowledgement of the hopelessness of his predicament, and in a wise and conciliatory readiness to accept the inevitable

At the same time certain circles among the intelligentsia have remained satisfied with the abstract affirmation of their freedom with the opportunity to criticise the foundations of society This freedom is also an illusion, since

¹ Ibid

the activity of an individual confined within the bounds of the spiritual life exerts no influence on the existence of man or on the course of history

We must reject any primitive interpretation of Lenin's words about the artist's dependence on capital. His comments should not be treated as a rejection of earlier artists who were true fighters and were independent in thought and behaviour. It would be vulgarly narrow minded to suppose that Lenin was discounting those truly progressive artists who refused to become reconciled to oppression, who would not adjust to bourgeois tastes, and who raised their voices independently in defence of humanist ideals and of beauty. Lenin himself brilliantly summed up writers of this kind.

Discussing art's dependence on money in the capitalist society, Lenin examines the fate of culture and art against a broad historical, social and philosophical background.

The significance of Lenin's Party Organisation and Party Literature lies in the struggle for real and genuine freedom for creative art. As early as November 1905, at a time when the revolution was gaining momentum and when the progressive press had managed to win legal recognition, many illusions sprang into being, in particular the illusion that literature had finally achieved absolute freedom. Many felt that the writers, now that they were no longer being sniped at by the police censorship, could create in freedom without any restrictions on their individual aspirations and inclinations.

Lenin made short work of these illusions. On the one hand, he pointed out literature's dependence on power of money and on the commodity market relations of the bourgeois system. On the other hand, he regarded the spread of literary careerism and anarchistic individualism as a serious impediment to the development of a genuinely free socialist literature. And it was in struggling with these that Lenin elaborated his revolutionary conception of artistic freedom.

Literary researchers would do well to pay more attention to the general principles implicit in the following quotation from Party Organisation and Party Literature. Emerging from the captivity of the feudal censorship, we have no desire to become, and shall not become, prisoners of bourgeois-shopkeeper literary relations. We want to establish, and we shall establish, a free press, free not simply from

the police, but also from capital from careerism, and what is more free from bourgeois anarchist individualism ¹

The liberation of creative art from anarchistic individualism as well as from the power of capital, was regarded by Lenin as an indispensable condition for the achievement of total freedom for the writer

Creative freedom is tied up with the well-substantiated grasp of the relationship between the creative individual and trends This problem has a great many aspects and a long and complex history It is organically bound up with all the basic problems of art that is, with the interpretation of the artist's standpoint and responsibility of the truth of art, and of the special characteristics and trends of contemporary society Meanwhile, the theme of creative freedom is often treated one sidedly in the light of negative factors influencing the artist from outside and in one way or another impeding the natural and free expression of his inner self

Mention must be made of an extremely widespread, one sided and primitive idea of the freedom of the creative individual The concept of creative freedom has already been extensively dealt with in classical ethics and aesthetics Scientific socialism has penetrated deeper into the subject Apart from resistance to external obstructions, the artist himself must still have the inner preconditions which give him the opportunity of free creative intrusion in the complex material of life and the ability to seek his bearings in its innumerable phenomena and to find natural expression for his individual talents An objective conception of creative freedom is only possible when seen as dependent on external and internal circumstances alike, as lodged in the personality of the artist himself

At present, the problem of the external and internal preconditions for creative freedom has become extremely acute and is now of particular urgency Opinions on this subject concentrate solely on the external circumstances restricting the artist's freedom the rules of censorship, for instance, dependence on the views of publishers and editors, and the demands and tastes of the leading circles of society In discussing artistic freedom many authors give prominence to this aspect of the problem only But

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works* Vol 10 pp 46-47

it must not be forgotten that such one-sided and limited ideas about the artist's freedom are being determinedly imposed on us by our ideological adversaries. According to them the only barriers to creative freedom are the definite ideological principles and state norms characteristic of Soviet society.

These one-sided notions are based on the identification of freedom with licence, anarchy, and on the claim that the individual artist has the right to be independent of life, yet there are many trends in idealist philosophy and ethics which in no way equate this supposed dissociation from the objective truth of life with the concept of freedom.

The artist is deprived of the normal conditions in which to create when the powers that be or the censorship inhibit him in some way or other, discourage his personal inclinations, and prevent him from expressing his convictions and the truth about life. But the artist's creativeness is no less warped by his own inner repressions when he is dependent on narrow dogmas, prejudices and careerist ambitions, and when he does not gravitate to the truth. Narrow-mindedness, a one-sided or corrupt view of life and the organic inability to rise to the truth—all these are fatal inner shackles on the writer's creativeness. Inner poverty of ideas and a preconceived approach to life coupled with unbridled licence, cannot give access to the truth or to the full expression of the individual's natural inclinations, since any slavish adherence to a preconceived system leads to isolation from reality and erects a barrier on the road to truth.

The writer who is narrow-minded and inhibited by his material is incapable of arriving at the truth and penetrating into the peculiarities of human nature and the real meaning of events, he is in effect, deprived of anything even resembling creative freedom. Often without realising it himself, he is merely the slave of his own prejudices, careerist interests, anarchistic leanings, or blind fashion.

It was in such terms that Lenin wrote in *Party Organisation and Party Literature* about genuine freedom, about the literature of the future which would break free of literary anarchism and careerism.

Discussing bourgeois literary careerism, anarchism and individualism, Lenin had in mind not only the blatantly venal reactionary mass production of words, but a much

wider range of literary phenomena Careerism anarchism and individualism often take the form of a compromise with commercialism a willingness to kow tow to the latest craze through fear of being thought old fashioned they also often appear as a vulgar and narrowly prejudiced sectarian attitude to artistic phenomena

Literary careerism is also a preference for trivial ideas, a kind of playing to the gallery, and a consequent contempt for the truth It is nothing more than gambling on the latest fashion on the demands of influential literary coteries it is a slavish adherence to group prejudices and a descent to the level of debased spiritual standards

In their inner being in the very form of their ideas, thoughts motives and ambitions in life, such writers are far removed from real freedom and inevitably end up as the slaves of various schemes and prejudices

Lenin's observation that bourgeois careerism and anarchistic individualism are unacceptable to socialist literature has become even more topical at the present time when there are frequent instances of an uncritical enthusiasm for the latest pseudo-innovations, and when these are being used as a justification for denigrating the truly great artistic values that have enriched the spiritual heritage of mankind

Adherence to the latest fashion imitation of the "new criticism", the borrowing of existentialist situations and characters the cult of "alienation", enthusiasm for realism "with no holds barred" like every form of uncritical and slavish imitation, detracts from the real spiritual life processes developing around us And this results in a narrowness of world outlook in many writers, in the spiritual provincialism typical of all fashion hunting

Anarchistic individualism like dependence on commercial tastes and demands inevitably deprives the artist of freedom and objectivity in his approach to life and invariably leaves him at the mercy of prejudice, bias fashion, one sidedness or dogmas

Lenin's arguments convincingly demonstrate that to define the truth of one or another set of views, a decisive role cannot be played by the fact that they are shared by certain men of letters who belong to revolutionary parties They do not after all live in airless space hermetically sealed off from all outside influences In the past, too, such

people were common Marx and Engels described this kind of revolutionary

" Amongst our comrades wrote Engels, there are many who consider it their duty to go along with every newly baked ism , and likewise with every unsatisfied bourgeois or bureaucratic intriguer and every unacknowledged poetic or artistic genius After all there is much enjoyment to be gained from setting oneself up as defender of all the persecuted and oppressed and from discovering in every 'ism a doctrine which can save the world but which is being oppressed by the evils of the capitalist order ¹

It is typical of Lenin that in defending the principle of Partyism, he should have drawn a sharp distinction between innovation and enthusiasm for the latest craze He touched on this theme, for instance in his article, "The Socialist Party and Non Party Revolutionism , written twelve days after Party Organisation and Party Literature Lenin sharply distinguished between the concept "fashionable and the concepts 'contemporary and innovative , all three of which are by accident or design now being confused by the adherents of the various isms As Lenin put it, their meaning is contradictory if innovation and "contemporaneity denote phenomena moving ahead with the vanguard of reality, fashion drags helplessly at the tail of life ²

Modernist authors are writing a great deal nowadays about deliverance from the 'burden of reality from the burden of society , and from the burden of ideas , as if this were a characteristic of the most modern art, allegedly making it possible for the creative individual to find his most free, full and natural self fulfilment The development of history constantly demonstrates the unsubstantiality of such notions and the triviality of their origins and of their underlying principles

Open commitment to mankind and the truth is contrasted with another interpretation of creative freedom, which claims that art should be dominated by licence or prejudice and affirms the artist's illusory independence of society and the truth In sum, an understanding of the

¹ Marx/Engels *Werke* Bd 38 S 554

² V I Lenin, *Collected Works* Vol 10 p 78.

world as chaos and subservience to chance, a total lack of real freedom

Certain major artists were prone to error Balzac's legitimist prejudices for example Dostoyevsky's Christian ideas and Lev Tolstoi's patriarchal bias But had the creative work of these writers been totally subordinate to these ideas, they could not have created their remarkably vital and truthful images The greatness of these artists is that they reproduced the essential aspects processes, characters and conflicts of life They broke through to the truth and dealt with the major problems and laws of life

The concept of artistic freedom is inseparable from the search for the truth, from the striving for unprejudiced and fearless penetration into the depths of life into its contradictions into its dark and its bright aspects towards the fullest and most natural possible development of the artist's nature

The concept "chaos" has a bearing on the most general principles of human understanding It is studied, for example in Norbert Wiener's book *Cybernetics*, in which he convincingly demonstrates that only by overcoming entropy, that is the domination of chaos, and by separating out from the variform mass of phenomena in nature certain organising laws or information, to borrow the author's term can man achieve true freedom, master the world, and obtain the opportunity of controlling its processes This penetration into the meaning of objective processes lays the foundations for the expression and development of the individual and multiform expression of man, his will his gifts and his inclinations

Many hold that chaos opens the way to a total freedom which means release from all restrictive norms and which offers unlimited creative possibilities

Many outstanding literary figures have written about the artist's creative freedom as an interpretation of the complex material of life which subjugates the chaos of the sensations and makes it possible to influence the course of events The function of Marxism in this respect is particularly important Marxism has enriched art affirmed Alexei Tolstoi in his autobiography I can remember the time when (as an aspiring author) I was living exclusively in this anarchy of all conceivable sensations There are some

who think even now that this, and this alone is the condition for free and inspired creation Dangerous rubbish! I remember that time as one of shallow waters of lack of themes and of total uncertainty about everything

True creative freedom, breadth of subject matter, and a wealth of themes not encompassed by one life these I know only today, when the great teaching that has come to me through the experience of the October Revolution gives me purpose and method in reading the book of life The major motive force of law governed development has appeared on the scene of history, and man becomes the owner master and creator of the present and the future ¹

But there are no grounds for supposing that life hands the artist his material ready made If the raw material of life is to be made into the fabric of art, the artist is faced with a tremendous task

The understanding of the world as chaos is, in fact, always tied up with the dominance of various myths, with a levelling out of standards since reality is represented as incomprehensible and uncontrollable as devoid, in general and individual cases alike of all connections and criteria And the chief trend of the artistic process in which a number of phenomena return to "primal sources", is connected with the increasingly multifaceted interpretation of a reality become more complex, with the crystallisation of new artistic principles which make it possible to achieve ever-increasing creative freedom Moreover art investigates reality in its own special way and masters it in accordance with the laws of beauty But the artistic mastery of the complex phenomena of existence, man and society are actually brought about only by taming chaos, by isolating faces facts and definite policies by interpreting processes by defining the laws of inner and external life

The objective conception of the individual artistic freedom is founded on the sober and uncompromising appraisal of the true current of life and is opposed to all schemes that seek to pervert the natural course of reality On the one hand we see in the present and past alike the negative effects on art of dogmatic systems which oversimplify the complexities of the contemporary world and contempo-

¹ A. N. Tolstoi, *Collected Works*, Vol. 13, p. 323 (in Russian).

rary man On the other hand, the mystification of the face of life and the impoverishment of art are the outcome of the various "myths", "archetypes" and other decadent systems which have a fatal influence on the creativeness of talented contemporary artists

Lenin shows that the artist's freedom is dependent on the actual historical development of human society. The progress of society and art means greater actual freedom, and consists in extending man's domination of his material environment by reason and in increasing his ability to influence the circumstances of his life. Only this historically substantiated analysis of the concept of freedom can provide the necessary conditions for overcoming the abstractness and instability in art which many writers have attributed and continue to attribute to this concept, and thanks to which it has often been transformed into empty sound, into illusion or even into a means of camouflaging selfish anti-humanist ambitions. Illusory notions of the freedom of art have resulted in severing art from life in understanding the world as chaos. Socialist aesthetics, on the contrary, sees the freedom of creative art in helping the artist to transcend the variegated phenomena of reality and to master the raw material of life. According to Lenin, if the artist is to achieve real creative freedom he must keep in step with life, with its realities and with human progress. It is not by deviating from the realities of existence but by fearlessly seeking the truth by profoundly assessing the facts and contradictions of life that firm foundations will be laid for achieving a genuine and not illusory freedom of creativeness. It is not by wandering through chaos or by severing himself from the processes of existence but by philosophically and artistically mastering the material of past, present and future reality that the artist finds the key to true creative freedom, the key giving access to the great truth of the epoch, to oneness with the movement of history, to influence on millions of people.

THE LITERATURE OF PROGRESSIVE IDEAS

Lenin's views on progressive literature are inseparable from the concept of the ideology behind creative art. Many consider that this concept was defined long ago and is not

in need of further clarification. Indeed the notion of ideology in literature and art, like every great truth, is familiar to a great many people. At the same time however the concept of ideology has been arrived at through centuries of struggle, toil, searchings and passion on the part of mankind's progressive artists. It is always seen to be in a state of further enrichment, it demands knowledge, reflection and an understanding of the fundamental processes of the society's development, it demands a feeling for the age.

Lenin irrefutably and convincingly demonstrated the active and influential role of new ideas in all areas of human life and activity. Of all the political doctrines, Marxism-Leninism emphasises and affirms with the greatest force the significance of ideas in the history of society. Without the transforming influence of new ideas, as Lenin stressed, history cannot move on.

One of the basic tenets of Marxist-Leninist aesthetics is the indivisibility of creative art from the leading ideas of the age. From the sum total of Lenin's statements on art, it is clear that he particularly valued works which, apart from the truthful representation of life, are imbued with the advanced ideas of their time. Characterising Lenin's views on art, N. K. Krupskaya wrote: 'Vladimir Ilyich read fiction, studied it and enjoyed it. But there was one thing about his reading for him: an author's social attitudes and artistic representation of reality merged into one. He did not separate the two somehow and just as Chernyshevsky liked to express his ideas in detail in his novels, so Vladimir Ilyich liked books which vividly reflected social ideas and he chose his fiction accordingly.'¹

This faithfully and simply conveys the essence of the Marxist-Leninist approach to literature and to this day it is a subject of lively controversy and bitter conflict. Even now, the problem of the relationship between artistic creation and social ideas remains fundamental in current literary discussions.

It can be seen from all Lenin's articles on literary matters that real art is always linked with great social ideas. For this reason he valued the works of Pushkin, Nekrasov, Chernyshevsky, Shchedrin, Turgenev, Lev Tolstoy, Chekhov,

¹ *V. I. Lenin On Literature and Art*, p. 243

Gorky, Goethe, Zola, Béranger and Barbusse The wealth of ideological content in Russian classical literature is undoubtedly the underlying reason for its artistic power and world wide historical significance Lenin emphasised that the Russian literary classics had brought to perfection the vitality and fearless honesty of the realist representation of life At the same time our great writers, despite their differences of world outlook and creativeness, proceeded from advanced ideas of their time which were of vital importance for the people as a whole

The progressive ideas of contemporary times adopted and expressed with such power by Gorky in artistic form, did much to help the advance of social awareness and were of great value in the struggle of the people for their liberation

The actual emergence and formation of Soviet literature must not be considered without reference to the decisive function of scientific socialist ideas In this instance, theory anticipated artistic practice discerning in the art of the past and the present the outlines of the future and blazing a trail for it All viewpoints which underestimate the importance of progressive political, philosophical and aesthetic ideas in the development of Soviet literature, are not a reflection of the historical truth

Lenin's substantiation of the indivisibility of progressive art and the advanced ideas of the age is in the highest degree, of urgent significance in our time also Interaction between literature and other forms of social consciousness is one of the basic laws of its development Moreover genuine creative work is inconceivable without this interaction, and any analysis of the development of art throughout its entire history will be fruitful only in close alliance with a study of the development of advanced philosophical and social thought, with reference to the struggle against every kind of reactionary ideological system Many reactionary and decadent ideologists are openly attempting to rid art of political consciousness insisting that creative process should be treated as an intuitive and purposeless process and as the direct apprehension of life It is typical of contemporary reactionary aesthetics that it should endeavour to separate creative art and thought and should tend to isolate art from other forms of social consciousness

Contemporary decadent aesthetic systems are openly

hostile to any participation by the artist in the political life of society and they categorically refuse to acknowledge any connection between art and philosophical and political thought. In confirmation of this proposition every conceivable argument is brought to bear beginning with the rebuttal of Plato's proposition about the connection between art and social and moral problems. Every possible variation is played on the theme of art's independence in its origins, aims and methods of philosophical and political ideas since it is based on the artist's own inner experience. The various modernist trends relegate creative art to the realm of the subconscious. The currently fashionable aesthetic theory of Andre Malraux is founded on the irrationality of artistic creation. According to this theory, art disengages man from ordinary life and transports him to a world of illusion.

The so-called semantic school of aesthetics is currently delivering a particularly insistent series of attacks on views supporting any kind of connection between art and ideas founded on the actual course of life. The theoreticians of this school are in effect, trying to represent art as independent of human thought as well as of reality.

An essential condition for distorted notions about the ideological approach is the interpretation of ideas as abstract propositions alien to the nature of art and the reality it reflects. This should be given special attention since even among men of letters who sincerely regard themselves as Marxists there are occasional instances of an erroneous conception according to which ideology in creative art can be reduced to the representation of abstract political propositions which are merely pegs for the artist to hang his images on.

The notions about ideology in literature as the sum total of certain abstract ideas and theses introduced from outside have nothing in common with Lenin's own views. In actual fact this is not ideology but cerebrality or oversimplified schematism. By ideology Lenin meant the combination of knowledge and progressive thought with aspirations, purposeful feeling and action. The true meaning of ideology lies in the fusion of the truth and advanced views with the artist's emotions and activities. The artist's ideological position is revealed in his characters' experience of life. It is inherent in the very conception of the story and in

its development right up to the final outcome. Ideas are the fruit not only of the brain, of cogitation but of the human heart feelings and will. The idea behind a work of art imbues and illumines all its many facets.

The meaning of ideas in creative work was stated by Alexei Tolstoi:

I cannot open my eyes on the world until the whole of my consciousness has been *possessed by the idea of that world* and then the world becomes meaningful and purposeful to me. I, as a Soviet writer, am possessed by the idea of rebuilding the old world and building the new one. That is how I open my eyes.¹

But mere impressions and ideas of life are not enough for the artist. If certain aspects of reality are to be truly grasped, communicated and realised in artistic form, then reality must be interpreted, experienced, and aesthetically mastered.

Typical of Lenin's aesthetic views is the affirmation of the interconnection between creative art and all the facets of social life. He rejected the view of art as a self-contained sphere which could only develop by virtue of its inner laws.

The unique development of literature and art in the 20th century creates an urgent need for the well-substantiated clarification of the interaction between artistic phenomena, on the one hand, and social and philosophical views on the other. One of the most typical features in the development of art and literature in recent years has been the spectacular revelation of the connection between the most complex trends in art and contemporary social and philosophical conceptions. If in earlier historical periods the philosophical and political essence of artistic phenomena was concealed, much overcomplicated and often not brought out directly into the open, at the present time, owing to the exacerbation of opposing ideologies, it has become much clearer and much more explicit.

Typical of Lenin's methods of investigating artistic phenomena is his comprehensive treatment and understanding of them as an organic constituent part of the current of contemporary spiritual life. Vague and evasive philosophical and political definitions were seen by Lenin as

¹ A. N. Tolstoi *Collected Works*, Vol. 13, p. 356 (in Russian).

indicative of narrowness and debased standards Lenin's own works are notable for the lucidity of their social and philosophical commentaries and for the natural way in which they blend with the illumination of specific problems of art This is the fruitful tradition of the scientific materialist approach to the study of literature helping towards the comprehensive and scientific interpretation of artistic problems And there are no grounds for diverging from this merely to debase literary criteria since any restrictions on research mean regression and science goes into reverse

The sceptical attitude observed in certain contemporary men of letters towards the effectiveness of social and philosophical conceptions in creative art has various causes If we put aside the impact of various intuitionist or formalist views, the blame in many instances must be attributed to the unsubstantiality of the social and philosophical trends themselves, since they are often incapable of furnishing an answer to the problems of life

Furthermore it is essential to take note of the widespread outdated and oversimplified views which have their origins in the influence of the fashionable and one sided "technicism", inherent in the thinking even of outstanding scholars who are progressive in their respective spheres of learning

Lenin was impelled to affirm the new revolutionary view of the world in his struggle with misconceptions, instances of which are to be met even in our own times Even now the press and scientific and writers publications devote much space to discussing the fact that if scientific and technological discoveries have brought about a revolution in man's understanding of the world, this has yet to be accomplished in the sphere of social and artistic awareness

Writers with so limited a viewpoint have failed to understand the course of modern historical development They are overlooking the revolutionary breakthrough in life consciousness and art which took place in October 1917 This breakthrough did much to prepare the ground for the scientific and technological discoveries of the present time

A standpoint of open alliance with the social and philosophical ideas of Marxism corresponds most satisfactorily to the spirit of socialist art and is an antidote to all formlessness in interpreting life and to all alienation of creative

art from the social and philosophical ideas of its age, from the general processes of contemporary spiritual life

The anti realist theory of art in every way exacerbates and makes absolute the difference between so-called aesthetic material and non aesthetic material including social and philosophical ideas Lenin firmly demonstrated the unsubstantiality and tendentiousness of isolating art from other forms of social consciousness Art as he saw it, emerges in all its plenitude and many-sidedness as an exemplary synthesis of the spiritual life of the age

Any identification of literature with other forms of social consciousness any dilution of it in abstract political and aesthetic propositions was regarded by Lenin as an oversimplification of the problem According to Lenin, merely to affirm the mutual connection between literature and various other forms of ideology is totally inadequate This is only the initial prerequisite or starting point of literature Materialist aesthetics, far from ignoring actually lay emphasis on criteria of form and style in art research, and clearly define specific qualities of the exemplary artistic comprehension of the world and its characteristics, as compared with other forms of human knowledge Lenin's statements lead to the conclusion that philosophical and social ideas become art only when imaginatively transformed, otherwise they remain purely as a decoration, as an appendage, as material of no aesthetic significance All phenomena of spiritual life enter the sphere of art in obedience to the laws of the aesthetic interpretation of the world, and themselves become an organic part of the artistic structure of the work

Revolutionary art is always tendentious Its tendentiousness, however, does not oppose the development of life, but merely expresses it more graphically Party progressive art is profoundly true to life, since it is based on ideas, goals and ideals which do not contradict, but which in every way coincide with the real shape, trend and laws of the development of reality

In contemporary Soviet criticism, views are still sometimes expressed which do not fully account for the decisive significance in art of the reproduction of the very material of life From the statements of a number of authors, it would seem that the shape of Soviet literature is determined by tendentiousness Without any reservations, they counter

objectivism with tendentiousness as a positive and fruitful principle of progressive art

Unfortunately the question of objectivity and tendentiousness is, in this case being viewed somewhat one sidedly. In art, it is not simply a matter of contrasting tendentiousness with representational objectivity. There is life as depicted by Gorky and Sholokhov and there is the tendentiousness of the prophets of despondency and gloom. There is the tendentiousness of Mayakovsky and Fadeyev, and there is the "objectivity" of the dismal lives of "little people", an "objectivity" which is purely concerned with trying to demonstrate the futility of their struggles. The invalidity of modernism and naturalism is not in the lack of tendentiousness, but in the lack of inspiration behind that tendentiousness in the equation of the progressive with the backward in the totally uncritical interpretation of life. Moreover, tendentiousness does not of itself guarantee merit in a work. The actual nature of the tendentiousness is also of vital importance.

It is enough to recall the tendentiousness which Lenin never accepted—the openly reactionary liberal, decadent, and Populist forms of tendentiousness which are at variance with the truth about life. For this reason Lenin categorically rejected the class aspirations of writers who tendentiously tried to idealise the mainstays of the exploiter society—the landowner way of life or capitalist enterprise. He rejected, in particular the elements of Christianity and non-resistance in Lev Tolstoi, of liberalism in Turgenev and of Populism in Uspensky and Korolenko—elements which were transcended by the realistic objectivity of their work and their faithfulness to the truth in reproducing certain essential aspects of reality. The "magic word" tendentiousness, no matter what revolutionary catchwords might dance attendance on it, never of itself had the least effect on Lenin. He disclosed its real, vital and ideological significance, always rejecting any tendentiousness which dissociated itself from the onward movement of life and the interests of the masses. Lenin rejected the claims of the Proletkult movement and the Futurists dispersed the smoke screen of their vociferous proclamations about their own tendentiousness about the building of a new, purely proletarian culture, and about the revolutionary innovatory breakthrough in art. Lenin clearly and irrefutably demonstrated

the remoteness of such tendentiousness from the main road of development in the new revolutionary art summing it up as a way of impoverishing the spiritual life of the people No less convincingly did Lenin define the politically erroneous significance of the discussions on revolutionary romanticism conducted in the early twenties by a number of unstable poets who denounced the New Economic Policy as a deviation from socialism and the end of all the original ideals

Dozens more examples could be quoted where Lenin graphically demonstrated the invalidity of certain aspects of tendentiousness, always testing them with the most convincing logic reality itself the true course of the people's life the development of the revolution and the building of socialism

There is tendentiousness and tendentiousness Tendentiousness alone is not enough And abstract rhetorical protestations of the purest tendentiousness certainly do not constitute real art

According to a comment of Marx's the fundamental weakness of Lassalle's tragedy *Franz von Sickingen* is the transformation of individuals into mere mouthpieces to express the spirit of the age the lack of "characteristic features in the characters Sickingen is seen by Marx not as a historical character of the revolutionary epoch of the 16th century but as a kind of abstraction of the revolutionary "in general Marx made much the same comment on another character in the tragedy Ulrich Hutten, who is "too much the embodiment of inspiration and nothing else ¹ Engels was of the opinion that the presence of vivid characters in a work gives it life and movement He wrote to Marx about Shakespeare's comedies *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* " In the first act of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* there is more life and reality than in all German literature and Launce with his dog Crab is alone worth more than all the German comedies put together ² Engels foresaw that in a literature based on the ideas of socialism and on a knowledge of the historical prospects, there would be a far more consistent merging of progressive thought and realistic narrative According to

¹ K Marx and F Engels *Selected Correspondence* p 140

² Ibid , p 349

Engels, ideological tendentiousness should of itself emerge from situation and action without the attention having to be specially drawn to it. On the other hand dreariness and mediocrity in literature gain the upper hand where instead of genuine artistic embodiment there is only the cerebral representation of abstract propositions.

Lenin thought highly of the instructive ideological and artistic merits of Gorky's *Mother*. At the beginning of the century Gorky and a number of other authors wrote works dealing with the revolutionary struggle of the Russian working class. In revolutionary tendentiousness many of these works were in no way behind Gorky's novel. But they have not taken their place in literary history. For the first time, the new era came forward with all its wealth of characters and new colours in Gorky's *Mother*. It convinced and excited the public and will continue to do so because the ideas and themes are not expressed declaratively or in abstract form, but through the living destinies and images of the fighters for the revolution. They show the growth of class consciousness among the masses, and the nature and meaning of their great historical struggle.

Lenin's conclusions show that the artist's conscious ideological position manifests itself in the very essence of creation, in the trend and meaning of artistic images drawn from life and not merely through external signs, long-winded explanatory speeches and an abundance of naked didactic pronouncements. The most fiery speeches of the author or his characters, expounding in detail the most noble and brilliant theses, are no compensation in art for the lack of the artistic expression of the design.

THE SOCIALIST IDEAL

The problem of ideals in life and literature today deserves the closest attention. The notion of ideology always presupposes the existence in a man of definite goals in life, inclinations, and examples which he follows imitates, and takes as a model. These ideals help a man to find himself, to map his course through life, to develop his character, convictions and vocation. Ideals are necessary to people who are actually improving the social condition, wrote

Lenin "they are a matter of daily life" ¹ In his book, *Two Tactics*, which played a tremendous role in the preparations for the revolution, Lenin wrote with inspiration of our Party's most important task to announce to the people our democratic and socialist ideal in all its magnitude and splendour, and show them the shortest and most direct route to complete, absolute, and decisive victory ²

Noble ideals of freedom and the happiness of the people are at the heart of literary classics. The history of literature is inconceivable without the concept ideal. Progressive ideas have taught people to struggle and have instilled a respect for freedom and for the good and the beautiful. The Russian and world literature of the last century reflected in vivid colours the life of man, his struggles, his dreams, his quests and his aspirations. And we cannot hope to understand the history of truly great literature without recalling the dedicated spiritual searchings of the progressive writers and their influence on society. Remember Pushkin's words: "The goal of art is the ideal" ³ Remember Belinsky's demands that art should be imbued with contemporary ideals.

Chernyshevsky was convinced that the life was beautiful, "the being is beautiful in whom we see life as it ought to be according to our conceptions of it" ⁴ Life as it ought to be according to our conceptions of it—this is a superb and succinct definition of the real meaning of the word "ideal".

Lev Tolstoy expressed his ideas on this subject in even more categorical terms. Only a few works of art will continue to earn respect, and they will be the ones which reveal new and significant mysteries in life and illuminate the path along which mankind travels. No one has any need of a work which lacks an ideal. The authors of such work have evolved for themselves a habitual style by dint of practice, they have, as it were, learned how to churn it out, and for them writing comes easily. But where is the *new something* which must move society, and show it its own faults, and open its eyes to a new aspect of the spiritual

¹ V. I. Lenin *Collected Works* Vol. 1, p. 345.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 9, p. 113.

³ A. S. Pushkin *Collected Works* Vol. V "Akademia" 1936, p. 112.

⁴ N. G. Chernyshevsky *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, Moscow, 1949, p. 10.

world, to a new way of moral perfection?! This *new something* is missing in them! All our contemporary authors write very interestingly and, for the most part cynically, about love, women, and various incidents in life. But where is the ideal in their works?! You read them and ask yourself, why did the man write all this, waste his time, work?!¹

At the end of the last century various forms of decadence became very widespread, and even the concept of the ideal was all but discredited. It contradicted the sobriety of philistine realism. The Populists at that time merely misused words about ideals, and their ideals were concerned with moribund forms of society. Only a few writers preached progressive ideals and aspired to them. Typical of this is a letter from Chekhov to Suvorin on 25 November 1892. "Remember, says Chekhov, admonishing his addressee, "that the writers whom we call eternal or simply good and who inspire us have one common and very important feature they are going somewhere and they are inviting you to go with them, and you feel, not with your mind, but with your whole being that they have a purpose in life, like the ghost of Hamlet's father, and that this goal has not come to disturb them in vain. The best of them are genuine and write about life as it is, but because every line is imbued with an awareness of purpose, as with juice, you feel, in addition to the life that is, the life which ought to be, and this is what captivates you."²

Chekhov's noble yearning for the ideal testified to the withering away of the old ideals and to art's urgent need for new ones.

Ideals are worthless if they are merely the result of idle fantasy and unsubstantial dreams, and if they are at variance with the facts, then they can never be more than castles in the air. At times, indeed the course of historical development has stirred large sections of society with illusions that have been a great source of inspiration to the socialist movement but have never been fulfilled in real life.

Lenin was unsympathetic to all utopianism, although he renders due acknowledgement to the searchings of the earlier humanists and socialists who wanted to draw society

¹ *Literary Critic* 1935 No 11 p 82 (in Russian)

² A. P. Chekhov *Collected Works and Letters*, Vol. XV, Moscow, 1949, p 46 (in Russian)

into the struggle by painting attractive pictures of future systems. However, despite the teachings of the "whole phalanx of very talented people who expounded these ideas, and the most firmly convinced socialists, their theories stood aloof from life and their programmes were not connected with the political movements of the people."¹ The ideals of the socialists up to the times of Marx and Lenin were essentially utopian and could not be carried into effect. The socialist intelligentsia, wrote Lenin, can expect to perform fruitful work only when they abandon their illusions and begin to seek support in the actual, and not the desired development of Russia.²

The strength of Marxist-Leninist ideals lies in their firm reliance on reality—on the laws of social development, on the scientific analysis of the class position, and on the broad and organised movements of the masses, whose inevitable victory has become a prime law of history.

In the political life and in the literature of pre-revolutionary Russia the progressive socialist ideals met the requirements most urgent for literature's development. From the beginning of the nineties, the various reactionary—pure art trends began to exert a growing influence. On the other hand, the Liberals, and the Mensheviks in every way falsified and discredited the ideals which meant so much to progressive Russian society. More and more credence was given to the reactionary theories of the decadent movement and to the rejection of the freedom-loving ideas of Belinsky, Herzen, Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov on the grounds that they were hopelessly behind the times. In the struggle against Populism, liberalism, and various other forms of decadence, Lenin invariably turned to the classic literary heritage and vigorously defended the progressive traditions of revolutionary democracy. Lenin firmly and consistently upheld all that was noble in progressive social thought and literature. In this sense, his struggle against the reactionary Cadet (Constitutional Democrat) tendencies of *Vekhi* is of truly historic significance. Moreover, in conformity with life's demands, he set a new target—the fulfilment of the new positive socialist ideal in literature.

¹ V. I. Lenin *Collected Works* Vol. 1 p. 185

² *Ibid.*, p. 296. *ИВЛ*, т. 1, с. 336

Lenin raised high the banner of the new socialist ideas that were the driving force behind society and literature gave them a firm scientific foundation, and showed how they could be brought to fulfilment

Lenin proceeded from the conviction that revolutionary ideals could fully reveal their force and reign triumphant in life if they belonged to the masses and led them in an assault on the old regime. From the very commencement of his activity he worked to achieve the task of merging the mass working movement with scientific socialism. It was the achievement of this coalescence that laid a firm foundation for the triumph of the revolution, and for carrying socialist ideals into effect.

Lenin's formulation and solution of the problem of the socialist ideal have been of primary and fundamental importance in the formation and development of literature ever since. The revolutionary literature of which Gorky was the first standard bearer owes its origins to the coalescence of the mass working movement with socialism.

The solution of the hitherto insoluble problem of the ideal as indicating the true historical way to the new life, made it possible to create a new literature of socialist realism and was a powerful stimulus to man's further artistic development. In 1905 after the magnificent romantic images of "The Song of the Falcon" and "The Song of the Stormy Petrel", Gorky wrote his remarkable novel *Mother*, from which all our literature of socialist realism derives. In it, the new socialist ideal found embodiment. It is the lofty inspired, and yet at the same time thoroughly realistic and down-to-earth socialist ideal so often declared by Lenin to be essential, that distinguishes Soviet literature from all preceding literatures and determines its innovatory character.

Lenin mercilessly exposed the true meaning of the various pseudo-socialist ideals camouflaged behind universally humanist or revolutionary catchwords. He showed up the falsity behind the pretentious phrases of the Populists who represented themselves as the sole champions of sweeping ideals which they claimed were more spiritual and more moral than the "earthbound ideals of the Marxists." By ideal, Mikhailovsky understood only an arrangement, divorced from living reality, of elements which were better, higher, and more desirable than reality itself. Mikhailovsky, as Lenin put it, judged the ideal without giving thought to the

fact that these ideals could only be a certain reflection of reality and that 'consequently they must be verified by facts must be based on facts' ¹ not set up in opposition to the facts. The Populist catchwords about ideals were the facade for a utopian illusion which drew its content from the idealisation of the small entrepreneur. Lenin described Mikhailovsky's statements on Populist ideals as philistine morality unable to approximate its ideals to vital interests, facts, or to the actual development of life.

According to Lenin the most vital ideals are those which express the progressive and developing aspects of reality. These are the ideals which find their most convincing and most full blooded artistic expression in art, since they are organically fused with the life as depicted by the writer.

Lenin draws attention to Ludwig Feuerbach's observation that the ideal should not be an abstract creature, castrated and deprived of all corporeality, but a whole, real, all round, perfect and developed human being. Noting down this thought, Lenin goes on to say in his synopsis of Feuerbach's *Lectures on the Essence of Religion* 'Man needs an ideal, but a human ideal corresponding to nature and not a supernatural ideal' ².

In this sense, the vital and full blooded socialist ideal of Soviet literature stands in opposition to the distorted abstractness of contemporary bourgeois aesthetics.

To what extent the human and humanist ideal has been distorted in bourgeois art can be seen from Kenny's article, *Is Modern Art Dehumanised?* ³ The problem is dealt with by the author from a theological standpoint.

Comparing the paintings of the Renaissance with Byzantine religious paintings, Kenny, taking the ethic and aesthetic ideal as his criterion, gives preference to the latter, since, as he claims, there is more humanity in them. Declaring that art's chief task is to depict what is essentially human and treating this in religious terms, he rejects the vitally real features of the hero. From this point of view, symbolic forms of art, and even abstractionism, are found more ideal and more human than realistic forms which are full of genuine and vital colour.

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works* Vol. 1 p. 416

² *Ibid* Vol. 38 p. 75

³ *Meanjin*, 1957 No. 3 pp. 283-85.

In aspiring towards an unnatural combination of the religious and mystic ideal with modernist philosophical and aesthetic principles Kenny is by no means on his own. In recent years pseudo-humanist conceptions of man have become increasingly widespread in the works of reactionary ideologists. The West German journal *Universatus* published a series of articles on the image of man in contemporary art the gist of which was an attempt to prove the inaccessibility of the spiritually lofty image of man the impossibility of his embodiment in tangible and sentient form through realist art and which preached the necessity of resorting to abstract forms, signs and symbols.

In the light of Lenin's ideas, the shape of the new man of socialist society which we see as our ideal is clearly discernible. In him fine civic and moral qualities are blended with a full and many-sided spiritual life and with a receptiveness to the truly beautiful. Otherwise we shall fail to grasp the meaning of Lenin's statement that our workers and peasants have won the right to true art. This gives the lie to the attempts of certain writers to make spiritually impoverished people, primitive in their thought and feeling pass for progressive characters of our times. It gives an unattractive and one-sided picture of man to portray him solely against the background of his professional and technical occupations and interests, without revealing his inner world in artistic form. It is even worse when this intellectual impoverishment of the individual is passed off as artistic innovation. We can all bring to mind certain recent critical articles in which a lesser emphasis on the character's psychology was hailed as an innovative feature of socialist realism. There can be no acceptance of views which represent the ideal man of our times as a doer and not a thinker hostile to the beautiful, and rejecting art and everything outside his professional and technical interests. Such notions which impoverish the spiritual world of the hero of our day are certainly a long way from Lenin's ideal man in the socialist society.

Modern reactionary, especially decadent aesthetics insistently proclaims the antipathy of social-ethical and aesthetic ideals. One of the main signs of this pitting of art against moral goals can be seen in the exhibitionist and over-emphasised amorality of decadent art.

The philosophical basis of Lenin's views on the aesthetic

ideal can be grasped most clearly by referring to his treatment of the cognitive nature of art in the work *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. A study of his philosophical and literary observations will show how subtle and precise was his approach to the solution of so complex a problem as the ideal in creative art. Lenin disclosed the antipathy to all social and moral ideals in J. Petzoldt's Machist theory of "the tendency towards stability". In criticising the tenets of Machism, Lenin underlined the connection between the "tendency towards stability" in all forms of decadent world outlook and their loss of a lofty social and moral ideal.

Lenin's criticism of the aesthetic views of Petzoldt, one of the leading lights of empirio-criticism, is topical even to this day. In essence, the notions of this scientist and idealist are entirely akin to the contemporary fashionable decadent trends which reject the link between art and reality and which consider that art should limit itself to expressing the chaos of the sensations and of unbridled fantasy. Like the contemporary theoreticians of decadence, Petzoldt tried to prove that it was legitimate for art to idealise the formless, to debase the beautiful, and to obliterate the bounds between good and evil, between the progressive and the backward, between truth and falsehood. Petzoldt and other philosophers of empirio-criticism questioned the objective significance of the beautiful, trying to create an aesthetic of the ugly, and above all to misrepresent the image of man. With every justification, Lenin described the theory of "the tendency towards stability" as a doctrine of philistine vulgarity, as an ideology of stagnation.

"The tendency towards stability" was, according to Petzoldt, "the foundation of ethics, aesthetics and the formal theory of knowledge".¹ But in objective terms it is a contemporary decadent gospel of anti-social, individualistic isolation and indifference to the problems which trouble humanity.

The obligatory reverse side of the views held by the decadents of our day can be seen in the attempt to subordinate all inner life to the yearning for peace and quiet, to debunk and denigrate all social and ethical ideals. The views of these modernist theoreticians who isolate art from all moral considerations are very similar to the older conception

¹ V. I. Lenin *Collected Works* Vol. 14, p. 319

according to which all the ethical and aesthetic experience of mankind were derived solely from the tendency towards stability. Like Petzoldt in his time, the modernists of our day try to contrast art and ideals to prove that man, even in his loftiest moods, is not moved by elevated ideals and impulses or by a desire for the beautiful, but solely by the urge to suit his own convenience. Vulgarly unattractive indeed are the barren attempts of modernist apologists to fence art off from human practice, troubles, and passions.

In banishing the aesthetic ideal from art, decadent aesthetics has gone to the absolute extreme by declaring heroic characters and deeds to be "unreal." To treat the nature of art in the subjectivist spirit of the "philosophy of pure empiricism" is to lead, in the case of the more consistent of its contemporary practitioners (John Cage, for example), to the denial of all connection between the content of art and the aesthetic problems, to the negation of all social responsibility. There is nothing new about the defence of what is ugly and amoral, in the unnatural dismemberment of man as propagated by the decadents of our day. This point of view has been developed for many years by the representatives of extreme subjective idealist trends. Echoes of similar theories are clearly discernible in the sallies by modernist writers against imposing morality on art and in their contempt for heroic images personifying the beautiful. Without any justification whatever, contemporary modernist theories inflate and canonise the contradictions between the truth, the ethical and the beautiful, elevating this pseudo-dilemma to a universal law of modern art. Lenin, on the contrary, continuing the traditions of progressive classic social thought and criticism, affirmed the indivisibility of the aesthetic and the ethical and the organic fusion of truth and beauty, and stated that art should conform to high standards of morality.

Of vital importance for clarifying the problem of achieving the moral ideal in literature are Lenin's letters to the Social Democrat Inessa Armand. She sent Lenin the outline of her pamphlet for working girls, in which she proposed to include a demand for free love (for women). In his letter of 17 January, 1915, Lenin advised her to cut this demand out of the draft version, assessing it as a bourgeois, and not a proletarian, demand.

According to Lenin apart from the author's subjective desires and will, the public took free love to mean freedom from the serious element in love, from child birth, and "freedom of adultery" ¹ Do not, wrote Lenin to the author of the proposed pamphlet, "literature and life really *prove* that that is just how bourgeois women understand it? They prove it completely!" ² In her answer to Lenin Inessa Armand wrote in defence of her plan that even a fleeting passion and intimacy are more poetic and cleaner than marital kisses without love In his letter of 24 January 1915, Lenin rejected the validity of this distinction Kisses without love between a vulgar couple are *dirty* I agree To them one should contrast what? One would think kisses with love? While you contrast them with fleeting (why fleeting?) 'passion' (why not love?) so logically, it turns out that kisses without love (fleeting) are contrasted with kisses without love by married people Strange For a popular pamphlet, would it not be better to contrast philistine-intellectual peasant vulgar and dirty marriage without love to proletarian civil marriage with love (adding, *if you absolutely insist* that fleeting intimacy and passion, too may be dirty and may be clean) What you have arrived at is, not the contrast of class *types* but something like an incident, which, of course is possible But is it a question of particular incidents? ³

Lenin's letters on Inessa Armand's proposed pamphlet clearly demonstrate the high moral ideal which, he was convinced, writers should communicate to the people

Lenin consistently proved the materialist nature of the origins and nature of progressive ideas and ideals Very profound and clever! , he commented on Hegel's observation that subjectivity is only a stage of development from being and essence, which, in its movement, dialectically breaks through its barrier and opens out into objectivity ⁴

His views on the transition of the ideal into the real that is, into the state when ideas become the property of people and serve their activities were explained in philosophical terms by Lenin as follows "The thought of the

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works* Vol. 35 p 180

² Ibid p 183

³ Ibid , pp 183-84.

⁴ Ibid , Vol. 38, p 183

ideal passing into the real is *profound* very important for history. But also in the personal life of man it is clear that this contains much truth.¹ This proposition of Lenin's is primarily directed against vulgar materialism. The distinction between the ideal and the material observes Lenin further on "is also not unconditional not *uberschwenglich*."² According to him ideals the goals of society do not only apply to the subjective phenomena of man, but in their own way convey the direction, the tendencies of history's social development. Lenin refuted Hegel's idealist proposition to the effect that an unworldly existence is inherent in the ideal or goal and that the goal thus is in opposition to reality. Refusing to accept the abstract nature of man's goals Lenin points out "In actual fact man's ends are engendered by the objective world and presuppose it they find it as something given present. But it *seems* to man as if his ends are taken from outside the world, and are independent of the world (freedom)."³

Lenin not only illuminated from a Marxist viewpoint the great transforming power and significance in art of progressive ideas and ideals, but also deepened the theoretical understanding of means by which they could be carried into effect. Undoubtedly, the basic source of art is reality. But this statement gives no grounds for despising ideas: an attitude expressed in the opinion that ideas are "unreal." Progressive ideas according to Lenin coincide with the development of the objective world and ideas are also an indispensable manifestation of social life. Great ideas are always more real and more durable than any fortuitous or moribund features of reality. Concerning the passage in Hegel's *Logic*, where he states that ideas are "not inferior to temporal and contingent actualities" which also have no further value except that which is proper to contingencies and phenomena. Lenin expressed his opinion in two words "tres bien!"⁴ Here of course, Lenin had in mind the materialist treatment of the concepts "idea" and "reality", and not their idealist interpretation in Hegelian philosophy. At the same time, the coincidence of understanding and the objective world

¹ V. I. Lenin *Collected Works*, Vol. 14, p. 114.

² Inordinate.

³ V. I. Lenin *Collected Works* Vol. 14 p. 189.

⁴ Ibid., Vol. 38 p. 193.

is not calm and passive but active and in a state of development " The Idea affirms Lenin further on, is the *relation* of the subjectivity (man) which is for itself (independent as it were) to the objectivity which is *distinct* (from this Idea) ¹ The idea thus includes both the active relationship of man to the various phenomena of reality, and his strivings to affirm or deny them

Progressive human ideas and ideals are the result of comprehending the objective laws of life At the same time it is the ideas and ideals dear to the masses that give man fresh inner stimuli to creation and struggle arming him with will power toughness and confidence in his journey along new and unmapped ways of history Progressive new ideas and ideals do not become the property of all overnight Tremendous efforts are needed to make them the property of the masses And the outstanding role in confirming our great socialist ideal belongs to literature and art

The problem of the means and forms through which the artist can fulfil his ideal is absolutely vital for creative practice It is a one-sided and primitive notion which holds that the ideal is realised only in the image of the positive hero who can serve as a model for imitation, either in direct and enunciative affirmation or in negation The means and forms for fulfilling an ideal are altogether diverse and only separate aspects of it can be conveyed in a work of art But this circumstance cannot be a programme for the whole of literature for the latter is inconceivable without many varied characters without the truth of art without the portrayal of the most progressive people of their time who are consciously making history

As regards the problem of portraying man, attention should be paid to the occasional inertia of our thinking and to the partiality for certain habitual situations The problem of personifying our progressive contemporary is connected with the problem of the socialist ideal But the mutual relationship between the real and the ideal personality is usually dealt with from a one-sided point of view

A negative function has been performed here by oversimplified and debased notions of the ideal and by inadequate theoretical differentiation between it and the concept of reality, that is what has already been achieved in the process

¹ Ibid p 194.

of life's development. In criticism, the ideal is usually treated as something already accomplished and coincident with reality as something embodied in the wealth of images throughout the literature of socialist realism. In actual fact, this formulation of the problem detracts from the main function of the ideal from the latter's significance as a lofty goal which must be striven for and which is yet to be achieved. The true ideal is born of definite processes of reality and yet it is also the highest goal of man and society. Consequently, it simultaneously anticipates reality and indicates the target towards which man's activities are directed. The reflex of purpose states I. P. Pavlov substantiating the concept of the ideal, is the fundamental form of vital energy in each one of us. Life is only beautiful and strong for the man who strives all his life for the permanently sought after but never achieved goal. All of life, all its improvements, all its culture become a reflex of purpose, and are only achieved by people striving towards this or that self-imposed goal in life.

The identification of the ideal with reality serves as the basis for the emergence of various abstract and oversimplified schematic propositions which are particularly evident in the treatment of the positive hero, the shape of progressive contemporary man. The schematic and vulgar notion of the "ideal hero" has been the cause of many misunderstandings and futile quarrels and has been the theoretical basis for certain one-sided anti-realist tendencies, which detract from the diversity of life and channel creative art into a rut of narrow, abstract, predetermined solutions.

The ideal is organically fused with the movement of life. But these two are not one and the same thing. They constitute reality, but it is a reality which serves as an example as a lofty goal. Without this, the concept of the ideal is swallowed up by the concept of reality and loses all independent meaning. The ideal flourishes on the soil of developing life, is a property of it but does not substitute for it, functioning as a lofty, driving and motivated principle.

IV

LENIN ON PROBLEMS OF ARTISTRY

FORM IS ESSENTIAL

Lenin's judgements on literature stress the inseparability of cognitive, ideological political and artistic tasks of progressive literature, a thesis based on the experience of the classics and leading contemporary writers

The chief condition for fruitful literary creation is a truthful reflection of real life

But being true to life does not in itself ensure artistry. According to Lenin, art is a vitally important, essential form of human spiritual activity, intended to satisfy man's aesthetic requirements. Lenin wrote of the special nature of aesthetic perception, of beauty, of the satisfaction and joy works of art provide. This is an aspect of Lenin's understanding of the nature of art that ought to be especially emphasised. Various facile viewpoints, reducing the purpose of art to illustration of phenomena and situations, without taking into consideration the aesthetic substance of art and man's need for beauty, are extremely harmful to the development of art.

Lenin demanded truthful art of progressive ideas and supreme artistry. He paid great attention to the artistic side of literary works. His statements usually examine not only the ideological and cognitive aspects of a work, but also the skill with which the writer embodies his idea. Lenin invariably treated questions of form and content as inseparable from one another. Their unity has a firm philosophical basis in Lenin's theory of knowledge.

A primary task of scientific literary criticism is complex, many-sided investigation of the specific nature of aesthetic

apprehension of reality of the features of different forms of artistic generalisation

The most widespread error leading to one sided view of the nature of art, is primitive identification of the general principles of cognition with the principles of artistic form. Although form in art is undoubtedly inseparable from its cognitive function, the cognitive and expressive principles of art are by no means identical

Whereas the basic principle, the general scientific criterion of cognition is the repetition of phenomena, serving as a basis for deducing general laws and tendencies, the basic principle of art is the individualisation of phenomena. The distinctive feature of artistic form is its individual, historical and stylistic diversity

In the work of fiction various conventional forms are necessary such as hyperbole displacement of events, symbolics and parable. Without them, the artistic means of socialist literature would be so narrow, that it could not possibly fulfill its function in contemporary life

"The universal exists," V. I. Lenin wrote, "only in the individual and through the individual. Every individual is (in one way or another) a universal. Every universal is (a fragment, or an aspect, or the essence of) an individual. Every universal only approximately embraces all the individual objects. Every individual enters incompletely into the universal etc., etc. Every individual is connected by thousands of transitions with other *kinds* of individuals (things, phenomena, processes), etc." ¹

In his reflections on art Lenin very precisely illuminates the complex dialectics of form and content, their interpenetration and mutual transition. He draws a sharp distinction between various aspects of the concept of form. On the one hand his general statements express the view of literature as one of the forms of human cognition of the world. This aesthetico-philosophical concept of form is defined in his article "Party Organisation and Party Literature" and his articles on Tolstoi. On the other hand, form appears as one of the properties, one of the features of art itself. This is the concept of form involved in his statements on the degree of artistic skill of a particular writer, the expressiveness of his images, the vividness and precision of his language.

¹ V. I. Lenin *Collected Works* Vol 38 p. 361

From the sum of Lenin's judgements on form and content it follows that form is not a passive, external casing and, although conditioned by the content, is not indifferent to it but active. Without form, the content of literature is deprived of its impact, its effective power, is immobile and remains outside the framework of art. Form can contradict content, cloud or distort it or, on the contrary, promote its more vivid expression.

If literature is to reach millions of people, belong to them and enrich their culture, it must be artistically perfect and striking. Otherwise, the author's idea does not achieve expression. Lenin insisted that the ability to find the appropriate form is one of the most valuable qualities of the writer.

The essential features of literature are imagery, expressive vividness, strength of feeling, clarity and expressiveness of language. Lenin notes these features in the classics. In characterising Tolstoy's activity Lenin does not confine himself to analysing the special features of the writer's world outlook but also notes that he is a brilliant artist, "who has not only drawn incomparable pictures of Russian life but has made first-class contributions to world literature."¹ Lenin stresses in Tolstoy's works the author's "power of feeling, passion, conviction, 'freshness, sincerity, courage', and his endeavour to 'get to the root of things', and find the true cause of the plight of the masses."

The expressive means of art are not in themselves artistic form, but simply its essential active ingredients, its raw material, so to speak. They only become genuine artistic form in conjunction with a particular content in the organised structure of a work, in the integral artistic image.

Certain conclusions for interpreting the actual concept of artistry follow from Lenin's principle of evaluating works of literature in the unity of form and content. The thesis that artistic form is irreducible to the sum of expressive means is most important for a correct assessment of the substance and degree of artistry. Artistic perfection is achieved not by combining different expressive devices, but by creative use of all elements of the artistic language for imaginative expression of the content.

Lenin's statements on literature show that he always prized above all else a profound and comprehensive depic-

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 15, p. 205

tion of the life of man and society Lenin was for literature with scope and depth that would penetrate people's spiritual world, social relations and psychology. A good writer does not simply describe events, but traces the tendencies of their development, delves into the deep corners of the human soul that are invisible to others. Lenin held that Tolstoi's great achievement was his "most sober realism, the tearing away of all and sundry masks. Brilliantly revealing the inner depths of his heroes, Tolstoi managed to convey the moods and tendencies that were common to millions of Russians at a certain time."

The writer's ability to delve into the depths of the human soul, of personal and social relations, present the inner world of characters in high relief, Lenin regarded as one of the hallmarks of genuinely great literary art. Lenin was a great admirer of Chekhov's literary style, "in which supreme truth to life, simplicity and precision of artistic language were combined with such remarkable harmony."¹

Knowledge of the laws of aesthetics and specific features of artistic creation, and deep generalising thought were combined in Lenin with ready responsiveness to works of art. He looked upon literary characters as real people, approving or disapproving of their actions as the case might be, and for him the most complex abstract laws and direct perception of life were equally accessible.

This organic fusion of direct perception of the work of art with broad generalising thought can be clearly seen in the young Lenin's reaction to Chekhov's short story "Ward No 6". A. I. Ulyanova Yelizarova quotes what Lenin said about it: "When I finished reading this story last night, I felt positively afraid. I just could not remain in my room, but had to get up and go out. I had the feeling that I, too, was locked up in Ward No 6."²

The feelings by which Lenin was oppressed in this case were not of a purely personal, biographical character. They convey very subtly the profound philosophico-emotional and symbolic meaning of Chekhov's story, which captures the sinister, stifling atmosphere of pessimism which prevailed in Russia at the end of the 19th century, and which was to

¹ G. M. Krzhizhanovsky, *About Vladimir Ilyich*, Moscow, 1933, p. 106 (in Russian).

² *Reminiscences of Lenin by His Relatives*, Moscow, 1956, p. 43.

grow in intensity in the following years especially in the period of reaction after the suppression of the 1905 Revolution

The way Lenin perceived classical literary images was entirely conditioned by the distinctive features of his spiritual cast as a great revolutionary and thinker and at the same time the most human of men with his characteristic broad approach to art Nadezhda Krupskaya in her memoirs aptly characterised the difference in the way Lenin and a Swiss audience reacted to a production of Tolstoi's play *A Living Corpse*

"In Switzerland petty bourgeois philistinism reigned everywhere Once a Russian theatrical company that performed in German came to Bern and put on Tolstoi's *Living Corpse* They did it very well The play greatly moved Ilyich, who had a profound loathing for all forms of philistinism and convention He wanted to go and see it once again The Russians in general liked it very much The Swiss liked it too But what did they like about it they felt terribly sorry for Protasov's wife and sympathised deeply with her lot Such a wayward husband she was landed with and they being such rich and important people, who could have lived so happily Poor Lizal¹

In the extremely complicated plot and psychological situations of Tolstoi's play, and the vicissitudes of its hero, Lenin noticed the most essential, decisive features We have every reason to believe that the play moved Lenin by its sincere powerful protest against the rule of conventions and hypocrisy ruining people's lives The profound humanity of Tolstoi's play, the subtle embodiment of the emotions and sufferings of the characters, and the tragic conflicts of their life could not fail to arouse a lively response in Lenin For Lenin, apt characterisation and graphic narrative are constant criteria of literary artistry Thus, in his article *Leo Tolstoi and His Epoch* Lenin quotes the words of Levin in *Anna Karenina* ('Here in Russia everything has now been turned upside down and is only just taking shape') and adds "It is difficult to imagine a more apt characterisation of the period 1861-1905 He goes on to say that in Levin's words, Tolstoi "very vividly expressed the nature of the turn in Russia's history that took place during this

¹ V I Lenin on Literature and Art, p 624 (in Russian)

half-century" ¹ Lenin demanded the same from publicism as well as fiction

In his *What the "Friends of the People" Are* Lenin compares the articles of the young Narodnik Mikhailovsky with his later articles and concludes that he wrote better in his youth. In a later chapter he refers once more to one of Mikhailovsky's early articles "About the Russian Edition of K. Marx's Book" as follows: written in a very lively and brisk style (compared with his present writings). ² Examining Skaldin and Engelhardt's publicistic sketches of peasant life, Lenin remarked on their similarity of form and content. However, he wrote, "Engelhardt is much more talented than Skaldin, and his letters from the country are incomparably more lively and imaginative. The lengthy disquisitions of the serious author of *In the Backwoods* and *in the Capital* are not to be found in Engelhardt's book, which, for its part, is replete with deft delineation and imagery." ³ Indeed, Lenin held that it was the literary qualities of Engelhardt's book that had earned it lasting popularity with the reading public, "while Skaldin's book is almost completely forgotten." ⁴

Lenin admired the creative perspicacity of authors who "perceive more *freshly* much that old experienced workers overlook because they are too used to it." (Letter to the Comrades). ⁵ For only then he was convinced could the "everyday" and mundane side of life be perceived from a new angle.

According to V. Desnitsky, Lenin set great store by a writer's ability to discern the small details of life, facts and words which convey an immediate and direct impression of life. What attracted Lenin about Gorky's talent was his acute power of observation, his accurate perception of details, vivid impressions, picture-like descriptions, penetrating remarks about people and events. "One should learn from him how to look and listen." ⁶ Lenin used to say:

Lenin defended the principle of artistic truth, sharply condemning various formalistic tricks, although attacks on

¹ V. I. Lenin on Literature and Art, Moscow, 1970, p. 58.

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, pp. 257-58.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 506-07.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 507.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. 7, p. 528.

⁶ *The Live Lenin Writers' Reminiscences of V. I. Lenin*, Moscow, 1965, pp. 35-36 (in Russian).

realism were often concealed behind arch revolutionary slogans. Lenin brought the principle of truthfulness in art firmly to the foreground thus clearly separating typification which is the basis of realism from the various contrivances of decadents and formalists who distort reality.

At the same time, we cannot agree with the opinion that Lenin recognised only realist art and categorically rejected all works by authors of other trends. This is a one-sided view that is neither historical nor concrete. Of course, realism was closest of all to Lenin. He firmly rejected reactionary currents in art. But on cultural questions Lenin was always against all kinds of dogmatism and sectarianism. He adopted a concrete historical approach to the form and content of works of art always stressing as the leading principle the content: truth to life, in whatever forms it was expressed, emphasising that the new revolutionary reality would determine the development of new forms in art.

Lenin attached great importance to the search for truly original form. The following statement on eccentricism as a special form of art, quoted by Gorky, is significant in this respect. Here is a kind of satirical or sceptical attitude to the generally accepted, a striving to turn it inside out, somewhat distort it, show the illogical nature of the ordinary. A bit far-fetched but interesting! ¹

Sometimes unusual expressive devices seem to illuminate an object from a new unexpected angle revealing even in things with which we have long been familiar unusual and hitherto hidden features. But Lenin rejected the works of writers who attempted to confine their artistic tasks entirely to searching for a special unusual angle that would destroy the normal relationships between things. Such search for the eccentric lays bare the formal device. And every genuine artist makes sure that his devices do not mar the meaning of reality but help reveal its inner essence.

As regards works of art, Lenin never confined his attention to their cognitive and educative significance. He was also concerned with the joyous feeling produced from contact with beauty, what is usually called aesthetic pleasure.

A feature of Lenin's aesthetic perception was his sensitivity to what is truly beautiful in form and content. For Lenin, aesthetic apprehension of life and the concept of

¹ M. Gorky, *Collected Works* Vol. 17, p. 16 (in Russian)

beauty involved as a *sine qua non* the unity of the social ethic and aesthetic principles. The artist A. Magaram describes how a still life by Claude Monet produced a lively emotional response in Lenin, and reports Lenin's actual words to him in the art gallery: "Look at that now! I don't know anything about technique, I don't know just how the artist achieved such a charming effect, but I feel aesthetic pleasure. I find that picture delightful to look at, that I can tell you." Indeed, the painting was very original colour wise, the combination of colours being exceptionally harmonious. I looked at the signature. The author was the well known French painter Claude Monet.¹

The words "I feel aesthetic pleasure" convey Lenin's subtle perception of the special aesthetic nature of works of art producing an emotional uplift.

Lenin approved of romantic forms in art, convention and symbolics, provided they help promote a deeper understanding of the world, the meaning of life, the excitement of its transformation. It is well known how fond Lenin was of Gorky's "Song of the Falcon" and "Song of the Stormy Petrel", which represent in colourful allegorical images the advance of the revolutionary storm. Lenin also saw the great importance of progressive romanticism in the works of other writers. Thus, in Victor Hugo's *Les Châtiments* he sensed the "breath of revolution".²

In recent years a number of writers have developed a highly suspicious attitude to the well known thesis of the combination of realistic and romantic principles in works of revolutionary literature, almost invariably representing it as a kind of dogmatic relic. How much ironic derision and categorical criticism has been directed at this ideal!

In actual fact, such "irony" is totally uncalled for, since it merely testifies to amazing ignorance of the history of literature. Long before the term socialist realism was coined, long before Soviet literature came into being, the idea of combining the realist and romantic principles had a long history both in fiction and literary criticism, and was a subject of protracted polemics and a result of intense creative search and contemplation by major writers. Even in the works of Lermontov and Gogol, the classic critics of the

¹ *The Live Lenin* p. 87 (in Russian)

² *V. I. Lenin on Literature and Art* p. 628 (in Russian)

19th century detected a combination of realism and romanticism. At the end of the century Korolenko referred to Gorky in a letter to him as being at once a realist and a romanticist. Many other writers spoke of this not suspecting for a moment that their idea of the possibility of the most diverse and various combinations of the two principles would provoke such fierce attacks or such scathing irony from writers who love to expatiate on creative freedom and the artistic variety of literature.

The Machists, like the modern theoreticians of decadence tried to prove the 'aloofness of art' and to protect the "aesthetic complex" from not only all kinds of theoretical and practical motives, but also from emotions and passions, which supposedly destroy the specifics of aesthetic perception. "Whoever wishes to receive a complete aesthetic impression from a well developed action," Petzoldt asserted "must penetrate its psychological mechanism and hence acquire an understanding of those feelings which for the characters are connected with their experiences and actions. He must therefore also possess enough imagination to be able to place himself in whatever situation these characters find themselves and a sensitive enough soul to be able to sympathise with their joy and pain. But he must not allow himself to be carried away by these sentiments where such feelings are excited there is no room left for proper aesthetic sensations."¹

Indeed a feature of modern decadence is inhumanity and a marked indifference to the fate of the character, a suppression of all emotionality.

In connection with the question of the ethical and aesthetic ideal it is important to remember that Lenin criticised the rejection of romanticism by the empirio-critics. In the name of aesthetic stability Lenin wrote, "romanticism is rejected."² This remark of Lenin's is essential for elucidating the theoretical premises for rejection of romanticism in the past and today. In the light of Lenin's criticism of empirio-criticism we can clearly see that rejection of revolutionary romanticism is theoretically based on subjective

¹ Joseph Petzoldt *Einführung in die Philosophie des reinen Erfahrung* Vol. 1 Leipzig 1900 p. 202

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works* Vol. 14 p. 321

idealist views taken up and developed by vulgarisers of various kinds

Decadents in aesthetics and philosophy reject romanticism of a progressive active revolutionary nature. This kind of romanticism scathes all that is stagnant conservative all that the Machists tried in fact to theoretically justify in their 'law of "the tendency towards stability". As for reactionary romanticism one that idealises stagnation or to be more accurate, pseudo-romanticism it naturally meets with the full approval of the empirio-critics and their like since such romanticism is in full accordance with this tendency. Indeed today pseudo-romanticism is becoming a kind of banner of the decadents a synonym for all kinds of artistic mysticism and irrationalism.

It is useful to recall that many anti-socialist literary critics today identify romanticism with reactionary currents in art and social life. Typical in this respect is D. Cizevskij's *Outline of Comparative Slavic Literature* (New York 1957) which openly polemises with the interpretation romanticism is given in Soviet literary criticism.

The erroneous view that romanticism is alien to socialist literature was at one time put forward in the Proletkult and LEF declarations and the programmes of various vulgar sociological groups. This view has proved extremely tenacious and still crops up in the works of certain literary critics today. Its untenability is clearly demonstrated by the actual development of Soviet literature.

The question of abstraction in art also is not one to be decided in a spirit of outright rejection. Abstraction in itself is perfectly natural and necessary in all forms of cognition and there is no reason why artistic cognition should be an exception. Far from containing anything organically unacceptable, it in fact represents an indispensable specific factor of cognisance of the world. How abstraction should be regarded in art can only really be decided according to its purpose and content. "Thought proceeding from the concrete to the abstract provided it is *correct* does not get away from the truth." Lenin wrote in a review of Hegel's *The Science of Logic*.

According to Lenin abstractions if serious and sensible and not foolish reflect accurately features of nature phenomena of the objective world and the human spirit. But it

is essential that the concepts the abstraction expresses correspond to certain features of the object of portrayal. The nature of abstraction is such as to permit such a correspondence even with respect to the most subtle intellectual and psychological processes since every universal is (a fragment or an aspect or the essence of) an individual. One's attitude to abstraction in art depends on its purpose on the specifics of the artist's view of the world.

A negative attitude to contemporary abstract art as a movement is based on its tendency to totally exclude subjective thought from the sphere of cognition and its attempt to divert the artist's vision from the world, from real problems and processes.

The great ideas of socialist revolution have influenced practically all major writers of various trends. This process can on no account be reduced to the simple arithmetic of the passing of some forms and the birth of others. New revolutionary content paved its own way forward both in the old classical form (D. Bedny's fables) and in new forms and helped overcome the principles of Futurism and symbolism. Blok's outstanding poems *The Scythians* and *The Twelve* were also a significant act of destruction of symbolism. Bryusov made use of many of his old devices in writing poetry about the socialist revolution. Conviction of the transformative power of the new revolutionary content also largely determined Lenin's attitude to the work of Mayakovsky who at the cost of tremendous creative effort overcame the complexity and abstraction of his verse and achieved a monumental form appropriate to the new revolutionary content.

Lenin's theory of reflection takes account of the tenacity and viability of romantic or fantastic conventional forms. But conventional depiction of life ought not to be at variance with its general laws and tendencies. The decisive role here is played by the writer's outlook and views, the nature of his artistic generalisation of real phenomena. Artistic generalisation in realist or conventional forms can be made from different standpoints. If the writer's world outlook is progressive and corresponds to the objective laws and tendencies of life, the images he creates will truthfully reflect the social nature and meaning of phenomena, and enrich our knowledge of life. If, on the other hand, the writer regards all that he sees about him from an incorrect, false standpoint

and his concepts diverge from the real flux of life his generalisations will be false or one-sided

Lunacharsky recalls that "monumental symbolism which elevates the same social reality through artistic concentration to generalising crystals, almost one might say to artistic abstraction, was not alien to Lenin. Thus, N K Krupskaya witnesses that Lenin read Verhaeren during sleepless nights..¹

Lenin was especially fond of Verhaeren's lyric drama *Les Aubes* about a revolt by the people against their oppressors. The poet glorified the love of freedom and courage of the revolutionary working class and its internationalist fraternal feelings.

The symbolic images in this drama, abstract though they are, are permeated with revolutionary ardour. The symbolism is highly emotional and serves to assert the strength and potentialities of man transforming life through revolution.

The revolutionary impetus of Verhaeren's verse attracted the attention of *Pravda*. When the poet visited their editorial offices in 1913 the staff presented him with a collection of their verse.

The "theory of symbols" in philosophy, symbolism and various forms of modernist abstraction are natural products of empirio-criticism, of perceiving the world as a complex of subjective sensations. Lenin's critique of empirio-symbolism is particularly relevant today in view of the modernist concept of the inevitable transition from realist to symbolic, abstract forms of artistic thought. Lenin recognised the cognitive importance of "symbols", provided they are a special metaphorical expression of real features of life. It would be an unjustifiable oversimplification to deny this side of Marxist epistemology, which takes into consideration all the multifarious forms of human cognition. Examining the views of Helmholtz, Lenin differentiated between the historical and the theoretical content of symbols. He demonstrated that the views rejecting the link between the symbol and the real qualities of things were foreign to materialism. At the same time, Lenin criticised the tendency of a number of philosophers, notably, Leclair, to deprive of all life

¹ A V Lunacharsky *Articles on Soviet Literature*, Moscow, 1957 (in Russian)

content even those symbols which comprised it. The consistent Machists and their colleagues from the immanent school did not accept symbols that expressed some real life content. Lenin cites Leclair's statement that such a treatment of the theory of symbols can achieve nothing without a generous admixture of vulgar realism.¹ It is in fact the presence of this admixture that makes it possible to explain from the theoretical-cognitive point of view the vitality and strength of many artistic symbols representing one of the main forms of metaphorical expression.

On a certain plane, Lenin contrasts the term "symbols of things" to empirio-criticism and other forms of subjective idealism. He declares the view that "sensations are symbols of things" to be quite opposed to Machism, and associates it with materialism, adding however, it would be more accurate to say images or reflections of things.²

Lenin's remark on symbolics is of great interest in connection with the question of imagery and visual expression. Naturally, the philosophic concept of the symbol is far broader than the concrete historical symbolist movement in art and literature. Nevertheless, Lenin's ideas on symbols and symbolics have a direct bearing on art. Note only the remark on *symbols* that there is nothing to be said against them in general. Lenin remarks on reading Hegel's 'extremely obscure judgements on the subject. But *against all Symbolism* it must be said that it sometimes is a convenient means of escaping from comprehending, stating and justifying the *conceptual determinations*."³

This throws light on several aspects of the question of symbols and symbolism in art and literature. Symbols occupy a special place in the artistic cognition of life. Undoubtedly, some symbolic literary images even achieve tremendous power. Nevertheless, symbolism as a movement deprives art of its wealth of life content, since abstraction replaces the real appearance of things. Such is symbolism as an artistic movement striving to create abstract images, poor in concrete life features.

This is why Lenin had such a negative attitude to any kind of decadence in art. He refused to seek artistic wealth

¹ V. I. Lenin *Collected Works*, Vol. 14, p. 236.

² *Ibid.* p. 41.

³ *Ibid.* Vol. 38, pp. 118-119.

and variety in decadent currents. He was also highly critical of "Left doctrinairism", insisting on the unconditional repudiation of certain old forms, failing to see that the new content is forcing its way through all and sundry forms.¹

Lenin rejected symbols that substitute meaningless subjective signs, ciphers, for cognition of the external and man's inner world. The symbol, he insisted in his criticism of Helmholtz, can stand for not only existing things but for purely phantasmagorical, religious, pathological concepts, experiences, etc. For example, one of the present-day representatives of neo-Thomism, a trend representing a latter-day attempt to revive medieval religious scholasticism, Jean Maritain detects in paintings nothing less than symbols of divinity.

Lenin pointed to the idealist and agnostic essence of the theory of symbols, which "implies a certain distrust of perception, a distrust of the evidence of our sense-organs. It is beyond doubt that an image can never wholly compare with the model, but an image is one thing, a symbol, a *conventional sign*, another."²

Applied to artistic creation, "the theory of symbols" removes from art the reality of the external, objective world.

Lenin drew a sharp distinction between symbols as a particular form of transmitting real features and characteristic phenomena of life and subjectivist symbols, devoid of substance. A symbol in art bears some mark of subjectivity of the artist's individuality. But this has nothing to do with subjectivism, where the symbol loses all synthesising cognitive value and is restricted to the sphere of fantasy or the morbid, perverted consciousness. Indeed, it is in this kind of cleavage from life and distortion of its true appearance that lies the essence of modernistic trends from symbolism to stream of consciousness and modern abstract art.

Views of art as a system or chaotic collection of symbols are extremely widespread in contemporary bourgeois criticism. The Swiss literary critic Max Wehrli, expressing the views of a rather large group of foreign scholars who regard artistic pictures purely in terms of conventional symbolic signs (Beriger, Emrich, Maass), holds that this

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, pp. 103-04.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 14, p. 235.

is the only way to fully reveal man's essence. In his own words in art human existence reaches itself only through symbolic forms.

Today as in the past, many theoreticians of symbolism clearly distinguish between artistic symbolics as a particular means of expression and symbolism as a movement fencing off cognition and art from life. Thus Charles Feidelson Jr. insists that the term "symbolism in literature" should be distinguished from the term "symbolics", which usually refers to particular artistic devices. Symbolism is an artistic outlook closely related to the latest idealist philosophical theories. According to Feidelson, the development of 20th-century literature shows that idealism and materialism, romanticism and realism, are giving way to the symbolist view fully removed from phenomena of the objective world. While symbolics is one of the forms of cognising and designating certain phenomena and features of the objective world, symbolism categorically rejects this. Feidelson insists that there is no connection at all between symbolism and external phenomena be they politics, morality or even the author's own feelings. Literature is completely isolated and closed, having no purpose outside itself, and developing within itself.

When they use the concepts "symbolism" and "symbolic forms", the last thing the modern theorists of decadence have in mind is the concrete historical literary movement that developed at the beginning of this century. They employ the term "symbolism" very loosely to substantiate their own views mainly as a theoretical premise for various kinds of abstract art divorced from reality. The symbolists and many kindred artistic movements of the period claimed it was their mission to extend man's knowledge beyond the sphere of reality and through creative ability open up new, unknown worlds. As regards their epistemological sources such theories are based on the view that the outside world, nature and society and their laws are not real features of reality but purely symbols, ciphers of our perception. This is in fact the meaning of the empirio-symbolism which Lenin categorically rejected. And any arguments of modern bourgeois theorists of decadence about freeing art from the fetters of the objective world, and its development in the direction of abstraction, are essentially no more than a variation on the old empirio-critical and empirio-symbolist

theories, for which the general process of development of the human cognition consisted in the words of Yushkevich in man's striving towards a higher degree of symbolisation.

Certain aesthetic conclusions ensue from the basic tenet of the empirio-symbolist theory that our concepts are not reflections of reality, of things and processes, but conventional signs, symbols of subjective sensations. Reality itself becomes elusive and is replaced by a world of illusion. Lenin supported the views of the materialist Rau who criticised the theory of symbols, which denies the possibility of cognisance with the aid of our feelings of the essential features of things.

Depiction inevitably and of necessity involves the objective nature and reality of what is being reflected. A conventional sign, a symbol or a cipher lies outside this live content, producing a cleavage between art and reality and leading art into the sphere of abstract speculations or illusions. Modernist art today demonstrates a total mistrust and neglect of the outside world and what the sensory organs indicate.

Lenin's treatment of this question draws a clear distinction between symbols that enrich art and through metaphorical generalisation convey the meaning of certain real phenomena and symbolism that produces a cleavage between art and life, distorting the real appearance of things.

The problem of symbolism and symbolics in art is still very relevant today. Without its illumination it is impossible to fully understand the nature and the features of present-day modernistic currents. Especially characteristic of modernism today is combination of decadent naturalism, perverted, highly detailed descriptiveness with symbolics. The origins and meaning of this tendency are inherent in the inclination of contemporary reactionary philosophical and aesthetic systems towards a peculiar kind of synthesis, freakish combinations of intuitive and positivist elements. This reveals on the one hand a tendency to renounce full integrated conceptions and break them down into various combinations of externally mutually exclusive processes, and on the other hand, a sense and even on occasion a clear awareness, of the ineffectiveness and limitations of the underlying philosophical aesthetic views.

Lenin's philosophical works contain theoretical premises or elucidating the problem of form and content in art,

imagery and symbolic forms of perception of life. A poor understanding of their origins has produced reservations with respect to symbolic forms, a fear that their affirmation would be taken as a certain concession to symbolism. All types of socialist symbolics and modernist symbolics have already been elucidated to some extent in philosophical works, and they cannot be treated in literary criticism at a lower level than the scientific thought of the age.

Intensive differentiation of the real content of the terms symbol and symbolics is in fact to be observed in general at the present time. As is the case with all other "polarised" concepts, the concepts of symbol and symbolics are also often employed in diametrically opposed senses. The true meaning of the terms only becomes clear when we have established the nature of their philosophical content.

The idea that form and content inevitably coincide is a fallacy. In the history of literature we can find numerous examples of a cleavage between them, introducing serious internal contradictions into the writer's work. Such a contrast may be observed, for example, between the epigonic form of many works of Proletkult poets and their new revolutionary content. The outmoded eclectic form clearly circumscribed, impoverished and levelled the content. Conversely, the innovatory, energetic form of Mayakovsky's poetry strengthened the enthusiasm of his perception of life.

Lenin's judgements present the cultural revolution and the shaping of new socialist art as an arduous contradictory process marked by conflicts between different trends, the advanced and the outmoded, the genuine and the "pseudo", the real and the illusory. This process is a far from straight forward and uniform one and always assumes multifarious specific forms, since as in all other fields of life the revolution breaks old frames and forms and creates new ones in art and culture, too. The most diverse contradictions and combinations ensue, the most diverse tendencies and views emerge, both profoundly progressive, humane and genuinely socialist, and pseudo-revolutionary, vulgar and obsolescent. Although the struggle becomes extremely ramified, there is nevertheless a basic dividing line between art that is truly humanistic and its opposite, art that is anti-humanistic and rejects a better future for man and the whole of mankind.

Lenin's idea that all forms of levelling are totally alien to the very nature of art and the wealth of its expressive forms underlines the methodological importance for the researcher to keep in view all the variety of the art forms of the age

Lenin's works stress the complexity of the literary process, the untenability of uniform schematic solutions that fail to take into consideration the presence in the sphere of artistic life of the most curious interactions and combinations. Socialist literature does not take shape in a vacuum, but in a particular concrete historical environment where it comes into contact with the most diverse trends and influences. And Lenin stressed especially the irresistible influence of the revolution on all kinds of artistic currents, their penetration by the ideas of socialism, and the inevitable transformation of their inner substance in such cases. According to Lenin, the principles of socialist literature must, by historical necessity, influence the writers of other trends.

We are now becoming a mass party all at once, changing abruptly to an open organisation, and it is inevitable that we shall be joined by many who are inconsistent (from the Marxist standpoint), perhaps we shall be joined even by some Christian elements and even by some mystics. We have sound stomachs and we are rock-like Marxists. We shall digest those inconsistent elements.¹

To take the extremes in the development of contemporary literature, we have, on the one hand, the decadent line with distinct features of spiritual decay and decline and, on the other, along with socialist art, a large sphere of complex, contradictory literary phenomena marked by the progressive convictions and aspirations of their authors.

Of general vital importance in illuminating the complex processes of development of contemporary art and literature are Lenin's words on the all-conquering power of socialist ideas, his idea that in socialist society there is such a durable and powerful content (for Soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat) that it can *and must* manifest itself in any form, both new and old, it can and must regenerate,

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works* Vol 10 pp 47-48

conquer and subjugate all forms, not only the new, but also the old ¹

This idea dictates the necessity to examine literary works not in isolation or in the framework of general predetermined solutions, but in real historical conditions, with reference to the revolutionary processes and ideas of the age. History has already confirmed the intensity and variety of their relationships. The subordination of old art forms to new content was effected "not for the purpose of reconciling itself with the old as Lenin put it, but so that all vital forms of art should serve the cause of communism" ²

These statements of Lenin's have extremely profound implications. They show how in the very first years of the existence of the Soviet state he considered it necessary for the new Soviet art not to confine itself to a single trend, however fruitful, for example the heroic-romantic. Art can best develop on a broad cultural basis, inheriting and continuing the entire wealth of aesthetic traditions. Lenin was for full comprehensive artistic representation of the essential phenomena of life, and recognised the need for all kinds of different expressive devices and styles. The new socialist art can only develop successfully on a basis of creative diversity and apprehension of reality from various angles.

The problem of art and life, the content and image form, the specifics of apprehending the world through the laws of beauty inevitably draw our attention to the theme of aesthetic and extra aesthetic criteria, the relationship between so-called aesthetic and non aesthetic material. Most important here is to achieve the solution of the question of when and how the so-called "extra literary" categories (social, philosophical, ethical) and concrete real life material acquire an aesthetic nature and become literary phenomena.

To substantiate interaction of art and other forms of social activity and consciousness, an historical and theoretical accuracy is imperative. Unfortunately, in studies of socialist art which is marked by a particularly extensive range of such interaction, differentiation between aesthetic and extra aesthetic material and the complex specifics and

¹ Ibid. Vol. 31 p. 103

² Ibid.

conditions of transforming real life material into artistic material has so far received insufficient elucidation

Art is a synthetic form of apprehension of life. Although of the same order as other forms of social consciousness it is not identical with them. It is necessary to demonstrate the artistic transformation of material and spiritual phenomena in other words to show how extra aesthetic categories become aesthetic. This would provide a firm basis for interpreting the interactions of aesthetic and cognitive principles of artistic creation.

The problem of the transition of general principles into aesthetic ones assumes a special relevance today in view of the sharpened polemics over style. In the process of style formation the general extra aesthetic is fused with the individual aesthetic. It is indeed in style that the extra aesthetic material enters the realm of art, being converted into the fabric of the artistic work. And in the style of a truly great writer the general artistic processes and trends of the age find individual expression. Marx wrote how "one and the same object is refracted differently in different persons and its different aspects converted into as many different spiritual characters".¹ The same object of portrayal and the same creative principles may find embodiment in a different form. Marx goes on to develop his idea "truth is general, it does not belong to me alone it owns me. I do not own it. My property is the *form*, which is my spiritual individuality. *Le style c'est l'homme*. Yes, indeed! The law permits me to write, only I must write in a style that is not mine!"²

All realist writers have combined their work on language with the semantic and stylistic tasks of their work. Delving into the inner laws of development of language, they discover the specifics of the language of fiction, its expressive, aesthetic quality.

The most concrete conversion of the writer's world outlook and concept into the reality of the expressive word occurs in style. Style means the writer's system of expressive means including a specific choice of words, phraseology, syntax and all other literary components. The writer's style clearly evinces his creative artistic individuality, his

¹ Marx/Engels *Werke*, Bd 1 Berlin 1969 S. 7

² Ibid. S. 6.

association with a particular stream of artistic culture of his time. The writer's style is a concrete embodiment in the material of words of unity of form and content.

Lenin pointed out the need for variety and diversity in literature in forms, genres and styles and spoke of the deadly effects of clichés and stereotypes, schematic forms and prescriptions. As early as 1905 in his article "Party Organisation and Party Literature", Lenin said, describing the general features of the free socialist literature of the future, literature is least of all subject to mechanical adjustment or levelling to the rule of the majority over the minority.¹

It is essential here to provide scope for personal initiative, individual inclinations, ideas and imagination, form and content. This thesis is a warning against a schematic, vulgarised approach, mechanical equalisation of politics and literature. It is impermissible, Lenin stressed, to automatically identify artistic creation with other forms of social activity.

On questions of artistic form, the Communist Party has always repudiated sectarian attempts to decree or monopolise any single trend. The ultra Left wing, formalist groups were particularly active in this direction, trying to establish their own particular literary devices as the only acceptable ones. The Party always declared itself in favour of free creative competition in the development of literature.

The resolution of the Central Committee of the RCP(B) of 18th June 1925, "On the Policy of the Party in the Sphere of Literature" stated the need for free competition between various trends in the sphere of form and sharply condemned all attempts to prescribe and suppress as harmful in literary activity. The Central Committee stressed that it was imperative, while struggling for the socialist content of Soviet literature, not to give particular preference to any one movement in art form. Lenin's ideas on creative competition and the creation of works of high ideological content and artistic worth as the chief means of forming the new Soviet literature underlay the policy of the Party in the sphere of literature and art.

Developing the idea of the necessity to ensure the creative wealth of literature Maxim Gorky, speaking at the First

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 10 p. 46

Congress of Soviet Writers said that a task of special importance was to "determine as clearly as possible a diversity of trends in creative activity. Clearly, it is not a question of restricting individual creative work, but of providing the widest opportunities for its powerful development.

The subsequent development of Soviet literature has shown that the principle of socialism offers wide opportunities for showing creative initiative and choosing any of the various styles and forms. Every major Soviet writer has his own clearly distinctive manner, his own personal style. Mayakovsky, Serafimovich, Furmanov, Sholokhov, Alexei Tolstoi, Fadeyev, Gladkov, Fedin, Tvardovsky and other outstanding Soviet authors each made their own original contribution to our literature, enriching it with new images and facets.

But variety and diversity does not mean being unselective. It is forms capable of embodying the new content that are wanted, and not every form is suitable for this. Lenin, it is well known, was against attempts of pseudo-innovators in art 'to reject what was truly beautiful for the sole reason that it was 'old'¹ and remained consistently impervious to expressionism, Futurism, Cubism and other such "isms". Hence his criticism of the early works of Mayakovsky where the complicated ponderous form obscured the revolutionary content and detracted from the effect of the works. Lenin's criticism helped Mayakovsky to free himself of formalist complexity and, without going to the other extreme of oversimplification, achieve a fusion of high ideological content, artistry and simplicity that enabled him 'to sail on further into the revolution'. The active role of form is clearly evident from a comparison of its functions in contemporary progressive and reactionary bourgeois literature.

Progressive writers as a rule strive to achieve an expressive form for the most complete expression of real life content. Contemporary reactionary literature is undergoing a process of decay of form which is taking two basic courses. The first towards complexity to the point of mystification of form, the second towards a primitive pedestrian, mass-produced literature, comic strips and the like.

Karl Marx's idea that the law in social life is really a ten

¹ V. I. Lenin on Literature and Art, p. 660 (in Russian).

dency, the interpenetrating sum of various, often contradictory phenomena and processes assumes a special relevance today for appreciating variety in art. The scientific understanding of a law as a tendency permits fuller elucidation of the role of the spiritual content of the age, the subjective principle, diversity of artistic phenomena, expressive means, etc. in art. It is opposed to the widespread identification of abstract forms of cognisance expressing basic laws of thought with artistic forms. This identification is alien to the true nature of art. In fact, it is only by taking into consideration the entire wealth of forms and features of artistic phenomena that it is possible to scientifically determine the real tendencies of artistic development in the past and today, since individualisation is a distinctive feature of art, part of its very nature.

THE PROBLEM OF TYPICALITY

Lenin's statements with regard to typicality in literature are most useful to analysis of specific features of works of art.

Engels' well-known formula to the effect that realism implies, beside truth of detail, the truth in reproduction of typical characters under typical circumstances¹ points to the significance of the typical in realist art.

The nature of Lenin's interpretation of literary characters corroborates and develops the idea advocated by classical critics of the past to the effect that typicality is one of the principal categories and an objective aesthetic law of artistic progress, a vital condition of true artistry. Indeed, to express the essence of phenomena is only the first step; this essence must be expressed artistically.

The amplification of a character to lend it broad general significance, so that it may embody features of a whole range of similar characters, thus becoming general, is the main function of typicality. It is on this basic criterion of typicality that the classical critics concentrated their attention.

The most memorable typical characters in literature are distinguished by their verisimilitude, breadth and precise

¹ K. Marx and F. Engels *Selected Correspondence* pp. 478-79

detail that make of them a quintessence of the essential features or processes discernible within society's political, historical and spiritual life and lend them a generalised significance. If we turn to the concrete content of the concept of generic importance, we see that it does not reject but rather incorporates within itself the essence of a phenomenon. "the concept of genus is the essence of nature, is law" ¹ states Lenin in notes on Hegel's history of philosophy. At the same time the concept of generic importance presupposes the presence of essential concrete features, i.e., is in keeping with the nature of art.

Marxist Leninist philosophy and aesthetics bring to light the complex dialectical nature of the relationship between a phenomenon and its essence. Essence and the phenomenon are in real life interlinked and constitute a unity. Yet they do not directly coincide: essence needs to be examined and unearthed. If the manifestation and essence of things coincided directly then all science would be superfluous. An oversimplified understanding of artistic truth leads to naturalism, to a superficial, one-sided presentation of life. Lenin referred to this primitive principle of generalisation as to a formal definition proceeding from what is the most common and frequently encountered, and going no further. On the other hand, a substitution of individualised diversity of phenomena of real life by abstract essence leads to schematism and abstract one-sidedness. Artificial separation, just as identification of phenomenon and essence in aesthetics lead to over-simplified incorrect conceptions of typicality with negative repercussions both in literary theory and in the creative practice of writers. Lenin's ideas regarding literature provide classic examples of creative elucidation of the interaction of phenomenon and essence in artistic types.

According to Lenin the creation of types is one of the ways to bring out vividly the basic, distinctive determinant qualities of social groups and phenomena. For example, he advised Lunacharsky to write an essay on polemical devices resorted to by 'vulgarisers' working on the staff of the Menshevik *Iskra* newspaper. Pillory them for their *paltry method* of warfare. Make them into a type. ² These

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 38, p. 268.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 34, p. 335.

words of Lenin's underline the effective forcefulness of typification which serves to synthesise and reveal the essence of phenomena. Lenin's advice to make them into a type serves to accentuate the unique capacity in which literature and publicistic writing serve to promote man's understanding of the real world.

In Marxist literary criticism the concept "essential aspects of reality" has become a widely used term of reference. This classical definition by no means signifies that the truly great artist-creator of types is merely the exponent of the purely abstract essence of socio-historic forces. Essence is many faceted and is only truly revealed in some of its facets through a number of phenomena which art reproduces.

Lenin stressed the detailed thought which went into the artist's distinct attitude in the portrayal of aspects and processes of reality. Art demands first of all selection: the picking out of the main lines of description. Without this the result is shapeless and ill-defined: the artistic conception dissolves in a haze of abstraction.

When he turns to classic literary types Lenin reinterprets these, revealing in new terms their vitality and impact.

From Lenin's statements on works of literature it can be concluded that a type only emerges as a result of broad generalisations drawn from life and by no means can it be reduced to an amalgam of characteristics drawn from separate people. Typicality is measured above all by the profundity with which the given work reflects the inner meaning and primary aspects of events, the prospects of society's development and the concrete historical features of a character. In all outstanding works of realist art characters and events are portrayed with vivid truth, conveying most expressively the nature of socio-historical forces and processes at work.

Lenin calls for penetration to the heart of phenomena, for analysis of their most essential aspects, their main properties. When virtually all critics poured praise upon the deceased Count Heyden, Lenin wrote a polemical article against all this praise in which he revealed the true essence of this politician's activity. His answer to the question:

What is characteristic and typical of Heyden's political activities? brings out most tellingly the distinctive qualities of this liberal. In their time Nekrasov and Saltykov taught Russian society to see through the outward gloss

and varnish of the feudal landlord's education the predatory interests that lay beneath it they taught it to hate the hypocrisy and callousness of such types ¹

Lenin's utterances about the types found in Nekrasov's and Saltykov-Shchedrin's works focus attention on the complex dialectics of phenomenon and essence on the need for the artist to go further than a description of the external aspects of the real world. With reference to specific examples Lenin brings out the differences between realism and naturalism, between superficial external description and the art of creating literary types.

Lenin noted the realistic veracity in Turgenev's description of landowners' characteristic qualities although he was well aware of the contradictions inherent in the world outlook of that writer who found Chernyshevsky's and Dobrolyubov's peasant democratism unpalatable. Lenin saw a model of an educated polished liberal with basically feudal instincts in Turgenev's Penochkin from the story "The Bailiff" in *A Hunter's Sketches*—this character who at first seems a refined polite fellow turns out to be yet another cruel ruthless serf-owner. In this character Turgenev provided such a truthful exposure of the serf-owners underneath their polish of education that the figure of Penochkin still retains its realistic force as a damning portrait of liberalism as a political trend.

Lenin writes of Penochkin: "Here we find depicted a civilised educated landlord—a cultured man with a European polish well versed in the social graces. The landlord is treating his guest with wine and conversing on lofty themes. Why hasn't the wine been warmed? he asks the lackey. The lackey turns pale and does not answer. The landlord rings, and when the servant enters he says with out raising his voice: 'About Fyodor—make the necessary arrangements.'"

"Here you have an example of Heyden like 'humaneness or humaneness à la Heyden. Turgenev's landlord is humane too—so humane compared with Saltychikha for instance—that he does not go to the stables in person to see that it has been arranged for Fyodor to be flogged. He is so humane that he does not see to it that the birch with which Fyodor is to be flogged has been soaked in salt water."

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works*, Vol 13 pp. 54-55

He would never think of hitting or scolding a lackey, would this landlord he only arranges things from a distance like the educated man he is in a gentle and humane manner, without noise without fuss, without making a public scene ¹

In order to bring out the typical features of the outwardly refined liberal landowner Penochkin the writer was obliged to draw a distinction between the outward trappings of the man and his basically feudal essence

Lenin saw the philosophical and artistic power of the classics of realistic literature to lie not only in a faithful depiction of the external aspects of life's phenomena but also in the revelation of their inner meaning interconnections and sequence In Lenin's statements on literature the question of typicality is singled out as central to realist aesthetics its solution demonstrating the experience, outlook and skill of a given writer

In literature and literary criticism it is not uncommon to encounter deliberate contraposition of the typical to the individual the idea that typicality in art is allegedly achieved by selection of common characteristics and that all individual features must be discarded This is wrong

To convey the typical in art it is necessary first and foremost to reveal traits that are common to a whole number of phenomena However this goal is not achieved by a simple collection of traits In works of art the general, the typical is always embodied in individual characters, concrete, vivid pictures and details or to use Chernyshevsky's apt phrase in the form of life

In his assessment of Minna Kautskaya's novel *Stefan von Grillenhof* Engels stresses the importance of individualisation "The characters exhibit the sharp individualisation so customary in your work Each of them is a type but at the same time also a definite individual" ² The materialist theory of reflection provides scientific substantiation of the unity of the general and the wealth of individualised features in the type Most revealing in this connection are Lenin's comments in a letter to Inessa Armand

In this letter Lenin points to the dividing line between publicistic writing or popular brochures and the novel,

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works* Vol 13 p 56

² K Marx and F Engels *Selected Correspondence*, p 467

he specific form in which political and ethical ideals are embodied in fiction. While publicistic brochures do not admit of the use of extraordinary cases possible in real life, for illustrations of any general rule the novel form is not suited to the bare didactic exposition of general moral doctrines. The language of modern literature rich in images demands individualisation of characters, types and settings. Lenin says "If you take the theme of an incident, an individual case of dirty kisses in marriage and pure ones in a fleeting intimacy that is a theme to be worked out in a novel (because there the whole *essence* is in the *individual* circumstances, the analysis of the *characters* and psychology of *particular* types). But in a pamphlet?"¹ Noting that an individualised setting and analysis of the character and psychological make up of the types described are the salient features of literature, Lenin comes out against all forms of schematism, pointing out that depersonalisation and leveling out of characters are quite inadmissible in fiction. Dialectical materialist philosophy has also always opposed identification of the apparent and the essential and presentation of concrete perceptible appearance as illusory and unreliable, something that plays no meaningful role for determining the significance of characters and events. Essence, which constitutes one of the forms of abstract generalisation, cannot in its pure form be embodied in an image, since this demands first and foremost perceptibility of form. An interpretation of the general in art based on formal logic and disregarding the wealth of its individual perceptible manifestations leads to shallow schematic characters. All pseudo innovators who proclaim art to be the embodiment of the abstract encourage writers to depersonalise their characters and ignore their concrete individuality.

One of the major achievements of materialist aesthetics has been the formulation of a concretely historical view of man. In opposition to all abstract conceptions of man, Marxist aesthetics has formulated the necessity to depict characters as class-conditioned and has singled out as one of the criteria of typicality precise social characteristics. Marx, Engels and Lenin set great store by this aspect of truthful depiction of reality in art.

¹ V. I. Lenin *Collected Works*, Vol. 35, p. 184.

Lenin paid great attention to the social essence of literary types. In his view the progressive writer, in his generalisations should assess various phenomena from the point of view of the interests of the popular masses, i.e., from the politician's angle. His article *In the Servants' Quarters* (1919) is most significant with regard to his definition of a truly scientific understanding of the typical. Exposing the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries as lackeys of the bourgeoisie Lenin wrote that "the necessity to combine a very moderate dose of love for the people with a very big dose of obedience was characteristic of the lackey as the social type of the hypocrite. Here it is a case of a social type and not of the qualities possessed by individuals. A lackey may be the most honest of men, an exemplary member of his family, an excellent citizen but he is fatally doomed to hypocrisy because the main feature of his trade is the combination of the interests of the master whom he is pledged to serve truly and faithfully and those of the milieu from which servants are recruited. If this problem therefore, is studied from the political point of view i.e., from the point of view of millions of people and the relations between millions, one must come to the conclusion that the chief features of the lackey as a social type are hypocrisy and cowardice. These qualities are inculcated by the lackey's trade."¹

Lenin picks out the penetrating insight into the class essence of the characters as a most positive feature of the work of great realist writers. However he also calls attention to the other, individual aspect of these characters. Penochkin embodies typical features of liberal landowners. His hypocrisy, cruelty and ruthlessness are traits common to the social type of the liberal. However Penochkin possesses individual features as well. Emphasis of essential social characteristics in literary types goes hand in hand with rich vitality and individual traits.

Each literary type is a representative of a specific epoch, society and class. All such types have definite historical roots and are linked with the way of life of a particular class but they never strike us as nothing more than mere figures of the past. Lenin stressed for example, the continuing relevance of the character of Oblomov in our times.

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works* Vol. 29 pp 541-42.

While Oblomov is clearly a product of the age he lived in and his nature typifies the sloth of the landowning class these traits of character have not become a thing of the past once the class they typify has become something of the past. Lenin drew attention to the lasting and broad scale implications of the character of Oblomov which extend far beyond the confines of his social milieu and age. In his report on *The International and Domestic Situation of the Soviet Republic* (March 6 1922) Lenin stated 'There was a character who typified Russian life Oblomov. He was always lolling on his bed and mentally drawing up schemes. That was a long time ago. Russia has experienced three revolutions but the Oblomovs have survived for there were Oblomovs not only among the landowners but also among the peasants not only among the peasants but among the intellectuals too and not only among the intellectuals but also among the workers and Communists. It is enough to watch us at our meetings at our work on commissions to be able to say that *old Oblomov still lives and it will be necessary to give him a good washing and cleaning or good rubbing and scouring to make a man of him*'¹

Yet the meaning a literary type is not confined only to its social essence. Social characteristics come alive and are unfolded in the concrete individuality of each person. This is why literary types always combine social and class features with distinctive psychological traits.

The power and breadth of outstanding literary types often arouse varying responses from writers contemporaries. Lev Tolstoi wept over Chekhov's *Sweetheart* he was deeply moved by this story of simple unpretentious Olga Plemyanikova so anxious to find true love that might give her life meaning and direction.

"The author clearly wishes to make fun of his Sweetheart whom he sees in his mind's (but not his heart's) eye as a pathetic figure who first shares Kukin's concern with his theatrical projects then becomes carried away by the timber business then is depicted under the influence of a vet and sees her vocation in combating pearl disease before finally being caught up in questions of grammar and the interests of a *Gymnasium* pupil complete with peaked cap. Kukin's very surname is funny so are his disease and the

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works* Vol. 33 p. 223.

telegram which brings news of his death the same is true of the staid timber merchant the vet is comic and so is the school boy but there is nothing comic about the remarkable, sublime soul of the Sweetheart with her capacity for devoting her whole being to the man she loves

He (Chekhov V S) like Balaam intended to pronounce a curse but the god of poesy forbade this and commanded him to bless and he gave his blessing and despite himself clothed this sweet being in such magic light that she will always be an example of what a woman can be in order to find happiness and render happy those with whom fate unites her ¹

This response to the heroine of Chekhov's story can be explained by Tolstoi's world outlook which was infinitely humane but was already developing in the direction of non-resistance to evil

Lenin in his analysis of this Chekhov type interprets the author's idea in a quite different light he focussed attention on other decisive aspects of the story which he saw as something far more than a lyrical hymn to the unpretentious emotions of Olga Plemyannikova

This story like most of Chekhov's works is indeed characterised by the author's indulgent tolerance in regard to his characters by his gentle humour Yet this does not detract from the critical trenchancy inherent in Chekhov's work his uncompromising approach to shallow triteness Besides Olga Plemyannikova's selflessness in love which so moved Tolstoi there is another side to this heroine's character which Tolstoi failed to pick out the absence of any depth of feeling or stability in her attachments the ability to adapt to changing situations with no trouble at all to switch her outlook and ideas to suit the companion of the moment It was this side to Chekhov's heroine which Lenin singled out in his attack on the political double-dealing of the opportunists, as exemplified in the person of Starover (Potresov) In an ironical attack on the latter's political fickleness Lenin writes "Comrade Starover very much resembles the heroine of a story by Chekhov entitled *Sweetheart* At first Sweetheart lived with an impresario and used to say Vanechka and I are staging serious plays

¹ L N Tolstoi *Collected Works* Vol 4 pp 375 and 377 (in Russian)

Later she lived with a timber merchant and would say Vasechka and I are indignant at the high duties on timber. Finally she lived with a veterinary surgeon and used to say Kolehka and I doctor horses. It is the same with Comrade Starover. Lenin and I abused Martynov. Martynov and I are abusing Lenin. Charming Social Democratic Sweetheart! In whose embrace will you find yourself tomorrow? ¹

The Leninist theory of reflection that serves to define the complex nature of artistic apprehension and representation of life in art warns against all forms of oversimplification and one-sidedness in evaluating works of art.

Writers do not always succeed in capturing essential features of all aspects of real life equally effectively. In the history of Soviet literature there are cases where certain authors who had started their career before the Revolution and who earlier produced talented realistic pictures of the life led by landowners, the bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia (a milieu which they knew well), were later unable to create effective literary types when trying to depict characters from the other camp. Their revolutionary workers and peasants, their Communists, despite many aptly observed details and features, did not reflect the essential characteristics of the depicted milieu. Only later, after they had assimilated the new world outlook and made a detailed study of the life of the Soviet people, were these realist writers able to create truly convincing and full-blooded images of the New Man. Among this group of writers were such outstanding authors as Alexei Tolstoi, Ilya Ehrenburg, Konstantin Trenev, Alexander Malyshev and Leonid Leonov.

As pointed out earlier, what is usually put forward as the basic criterion of a character's typicality is his prevalence. The Soviet press had every reason for pointing out the incorrectness of the approach that separates the typical from the mass-scale aspect. The concepts of the typical and the recurrent or iterative are in fact bound up with each other. Lenin remarked that the typical is not the unique.² Yet they are not identical, although recurrence is one of the conditions of typicality.

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 9, p. 416.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 35, p. 228.

In discussing this question it is important not to stray from the concretely historical point of view, not to forget that all characters including typical ones develop, that they emerge and become widespread. The degree to which a given type is widespread varies: it is subject to historical fluctuation at different periods. When it first emerges the typical may well not yet have acquired a mass aspect.

The finest works of Russian classical and Soviet literature depict life in movement and in historically concrete manifestations, they reflect the triumph of what is progressive, of what is evolving. Marx in his day wrote in connection with simple working people that words of human brotherhood in their lips were not slogans but truth, that "their faces coarse with labour, radiate human dignity".

When a writer fails to appreciate new nascent historical forces this often leads to weakness in his creative work. Each type should be viewed not merely from a concretely historical point of view but also in the context of society's development. In his analysis of Margaret Harkness' *City Girl* Engels criticised the author for her incorrect one-sided presentation of the appearance and moods of the workers of the 1880s.

Lenin's political activities and writings refer to a period characterised by new historical conditions, when socialist ideas had already gripped the minds of the progressive strata of the working class who were taking practical steps to prepare and carry out the socialist revolution. In 1902 Lenin said that "Russia's man of the future is the worker".¹ Thereby Lenin was describing a vital process typical of Russian historical development, a process which embodied Russia's future.

Lenin's assessment of Gorky's novel *Mother* is of major importance. His high praise for this work and its outstanding role in the history of Russian literature demonstrate beyond all doubt that phenomena and characters, while still far from widespread can nevertheless be typical, since they bear within themselves in embryonic form the mass-scale, since they represent something irresistibly new and are endowed with a tremendous potential for future development and since eventually they will triumph over what once seemed firmly established and infinitely durable.

¹ V. I. Lenin *Collected Works* Vol 1, p 299 (note)

In literary criticism the relationships between the social intellectual environment the external circumstances and the inner individual logic of the literary character have not yet been fully elucidated

Classical literature is rich in examples of major writers approaches to this problem The formula typical characters in typical circumstances emerged from the experience of nineteenth-century realism Modern literature is developing this formula As the individual develops greater social activity, the need arises for a new interpretation of the correlation between typical characters and typical circumstances Recently, for no justifiable reason this problem has been neglected by literary critics although it remains as urgent as ever and has acquired new implications insofar as life itself has introduced many changes into relations between the individual and society While earlier the basis of realism was the all round elucidation of the dependence of characters on circumstances now the subject of the individual's activity, his surmounting of circumstances, and the impact of creative individuality on circumstances acquire ever greater importance

This bears directly upon the writer's choice of a progressive modern hero and the latter's attitude to life in particular this reveals how wrong it is to limit and equate different types of individuals Socialist art, while embracing the whole diversity of contemporary characters, focusses its attention in keeping with the logic of life itself on men of high ideals and vigorous creative energy, whose efforts and activity are changing the world we live in

Engels' definition of realism as faithful presentation of "typical characters under typical circumstances" ¹ has long since become a fundamental principle of socialist literature It serves to bring out the veracity of realist art, its close links with the real world, its broad generalisation, and its capacity for creating characters that embody the characteristics of whole generations whole classes This formula turns our attention to the living dialectics of social being and man in their historically specific interrelation

Engels' tenet is not infrequently interpreted in a static, one-sided manner isolated from the real march of history,

¹ K Marx and F Engels *Selected Correspondence* Moscow, 1965 p 401

and from the relationship between the individual and outward circumstances that is constantly undergoing radical change

Lenin's recommendation that the masses should be encouraged to adopt a deliberately creative approach to history is of fundamental importance for a correct understanding of the new relationship between the individual and his environment between nature and society for a correct understanding of new traits in man's character resulting from socialism

In the light of the diversity to be found in the relations between the individual and society primitively one-sided fatalistic interpretations of the link between typical characters and circumstances are particularly unacceptable. A demand for the depiction of nothing other than the identity of characters with circumstances leads in practice to a vulgar affirmation of passivity of predeterminism of the individual's evolution. While in Soviet literature the active role of the individual has grown strikingly and so has the diversity inherent in his relations with his environment.

In connection with the literary portrayal of the evolution of the modern individual any extrahistorical static interpretation of Engels' formula concerning typical characters in typical circumstances could hardly be justified. It is far more logical to depict the relationships between characters and society in dynamic evolution as socially conditioned and subject to historical change. The march of time which enriches man's experience and knowledge, and the establishment of socialism have brought about tremendous changes in the relations between the individual and nature on the one hand and between the individual and his socialist environment on the other, they have multiplied man's opportunities and scope for influencing his environment.

In stressing that art belongs to the people, Lenin criticised any lowering of the standards demanded from art as regards both its ideological and artistic aspects considering any such tendency harmful. Lenin categorically rejected all attempts to simplify Soviet art, to substitute writings of transitory significance dictated by the moment for true works of art. This concern to ensure rich diversity of the people's cultural experience led Lenin to subject to such harsh criticism the decadent writers, members of the Pro-

letkult the naturalists and all varieties of pseudo-innovators who tried to deprive the people of true works of art of man's great cultural heritage and palm off on them all manner of leftist gimmicks and cheap substitutes for real art Lenin insisted that our workers and peasants have earned the right to an art which is real and great ¹ This classical pronouncement of Lenin's continues to serve as a guiding principle for the development of literature in our times, when we are witnessing the people's rapid intellectual advance

WORDS ARE ACTION, TOO

Ideas do not exist separately from language,"² Marx observed in the *Economic Manuscripts of 1857-58* The life of man's consciousness is expressed in language "Language is the most important means of human intercourse,"³ Lenin wrote in *The Right of Nations to Self Determination* Language is a means of reflecting reality, a means of communication and of passing on people's life experience, an instrument for influencing thought and feeling

Lenin was distinguished from his youth by constant interest in language questions, a fine perception, a fine feeling for shades of meaning lexis and syntax While still at the gymnasium he paid special attention to the study of Latin, particularly to the specifics of that language According to the reminiscences of his sister Anna Ilyinichna he was not just the top pupil who diligently learned lessons by heart he was a young linguist, able to discern the peculiarities and the beauty of a language ⁴ Lenin often applied himself to the study of special linguistic works, both on general linguistics and on questions concerning the study of individual Slav and other languages He was familiar with dictionaries and made ready use of them in his literary work

Lenin devoted great effort to the study of foreign languages, both Slav and West European He did not confine himself to the usual mastering of the written and spoken

¹ V I Lenin on Literature and Art p 662 (in Russian)

² Marx Engels Archives Vol IV Moscow 1935 p 99

³ V I Lenin Collected Works Vol 20 p 396

⁴ Reminiscences of Lenin by His Relatives, p. 17 (in Russian)

tongue, but tried to gain a fuller understanding of the peculiarities and specific laws of a language. In 1899 while in exile at Shushenskoye, he corresponded with his mother Maria Alexandrovna on the study of foreign languages.

When the markets are finished N. K. Krupskaya reported "there is a plan to settle down to the study of languages in general and German in particular (letter of December 20 1898).¹ On February 7 1899 Lenin requested to be sent a detailed German grammar (even one in German for Germans, because those for Russians are usually very brief). I want to make a real study of German. Now I ask you to send me a Russian-German Dictionary one of those we have at home either Lenstrom or better Reiff's dictionary of Russian and three European languages. I wanted to order Pavlovsky's Russian-German Dictionary from Kalmykova's, but it is being issued in parts and only half of it has appeared."² Lenin repeated this request in his next two letters.

Lenin's interest in the field of languages was constant and extensive. I am sorry I didn't study the Czech language he wrote from Prague on March 2, 1901. It is interesting close to Polish, and has a great number of old Russian words.

Lenin did not study languages only for practical purposes. He was also interested in general theoretical and historical questions in linguistics, comparative morphology, phonetics, lexis and semantics.

Even in the tensest periods of his life and work Lenin did not lose his interest in linguistic problems. According to V. D. Bonch-Bruyevich as soon as the Soviet Government had moved from Petrograd to Moscow in March 1918 Lenin asked for books on languages for his personal library. The first batch of books which went to make up his library in the Kremlin included among others, Dahl's *Dictionary of the Russian Language* which he placed on a revolving bookshelf near his desk. Very often he not only consulted it, but read attentively the examples of proverbs and sayings quoted in it and studied the various meanings of individual words.

Lenin's treatment of the connection between language and thinking deserves special notice. The problem of language

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 37 p. 212.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 233-34.

as consciousness of reality is of particular significance in *belles lettres* Lenin points out the inseparable connection between thinking and language in his proposition that the history of language is one of the sciences on which the dialectics and theory of cognition are based

The founders of scientific socialism considered the isolation of thinking from reality, of language from thinking as the expression of a specific philosophy a definite anti-revolutionary world outlook *Language* is the immediate actuality of thought " wrote Karl Marx Just as the philosophers (idealists V S) have given thought an independent existence so they had to make language into an independent realm This is the secret of philosophical language in which thoughts, in the form of words have their own content ¹ The task of materialistic science in cognising the true nature of language according to the classics of scientific socialism consists in the necessity to descend from the heights of abstraction to study the vital roots of language its connection with life, with thinking

Karl Marx saw the cause of the pointless devitalisation of language of verbiage, in the separation of the word from thought In our day, too the following words of Marx still preserve their reality in respect of the modern linguistic schools which proceed from the notion of an immanent innerly secluded development of language Neither thoughts nor language in themselves form a realm of their own they are only *manifestations* of actual life Language of course, becomes a phrase as soon as it is given an independent existence ² Indeed, the isolation of language from thought and content arouses in a number of writers a sympathy for literary abstractions, for pernicious exoticism in lexis and syntax, for the destruction of historically determined linguistic forms, a tendency to incomprehensibility to unjustified pretentious intricacy

The modern theory of art has elucidated with sufficient fulness the differences between conceptual and figurative perception, between the emotional aspect of the word and its inner meaning But there has been as yet little clarification of the interpenetration of these two kinds of human

¹ K Marx and F Engels *The German Ideology* Moscow 1964 p 491

² Ibid p 492

cognition which is particularly intense in the field of *belles lettres*. One can agree with the usual thesis that as distinct from the sensuous objective nature of the image concepts reflect the general more essential characteristics of objects their inner connections their laws. Concepts are scientific abstractions synthesising the general attributes of really existing phenomena. Neither can there be any objection in general to the proposition that the concept differs qualitatively from sensations, perceptions and imaginations inasmuch as the latter are visual presentations of objects and phenomena.

Nevertheless by itself such a delimitation of 'conceptual' and figurative perception is far from sufficient for understanding the nature of art. The image is also to a certain extent distinguished by generalisation synthesis, revelation of the inner connection between phenomena and general laws that is certain elements of conceptual thinking. Precisely this complex intensive dialectics of the objective concreteness of the object with the generalisation the revelation of the inner laws of the phenomenon has hardly been studied. This all round comprehension of the nature of the word in which the spirit appears weighed down by matter is one of the main paths towards cognition of the merger in the literary image of the objective concreteness of phenomena with abstract thought, with the revelation of the general laws governing the being of man and of mankind.

In language the reality, the life of thought is expressed. No thinking of any kind is possible outside its realisation in the word outside its material linguistic envelope.

Contraposition provides the basis for the formal, semantic school in linguistics which substitutes for the meaning of the word a system of speculative logical rules and arbitrary signs or symbols. Thus Rudolf Carnap one of the chief representatives of linguistics directly reduces the whole sphere of cognition exclusively to the logical syntax of language by which is understood a systematic exposition of formal rules allegedly governing language.

Carnap categorically asserts that neither the formal rules nor the signs or symbols have any connection with the meaning of the words or sentences, but that they are exclusively rules concerning the kinds and order of the symbols of which an expression is composed.

Lenin did not accept linguistic conceptions which were close in one way or another to intuitionist or formalistic theories on language

In his summary of Hegel's *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* he put a question mark in connection with the thought that language 'richer in the undeveloped primitive state of peoples, becomes poorer with civilisation and the formation of grammar'. First of all Lenin rejected the theory that the primitive forms of language are richer and more varied than the later ones connected with the development of civilisation, which is said to cause standardisation of its spiritual life.

Understandably Hegel cannot be suspected in any way of puny intuitionist and formalistic notions. His critical remarks on the impoverishment of the language associated with civilisation and the formation of grammar apply only to one aspect of the real historical contradiction and are by no means raised into a general determining in the law of the development of language as is the case in the intuitionist and formalistic linguistic theories.

"History of thought = history of language," we read in the summary of Hegel's *Wissenschaft der Logik*. Quite legitimately Lenin's attention was attracted by Hegel's pronouncements asserting the connection between thinking and language. Hegel corroborated his thesis with examples from the Chinese and German languages. While reading Hegel's philosophy of history Lenin made the note "The connection between thought and language (the Chinese language, incidentally and its lack of development 11), the formation of nouns and verbs (11). In the German language words sometimes have *entgegengesetzte Bedeutung* (12) (not simply different but *opposed* meanings) a joy to thought."¹

Lenin's commentary to this proposition of Hegel's stresses the mutual connection of language and thinking although his notion of the content of the history of thought and the history of the language was different from that of Hegel.

The enormous shifts wrought by the revolutionary period put forward as basic questions in the development of literature and the entire spiritual life under the people's government questions of speech culture, ways of enriching the language, assimilating new elements introduced into it

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 38, p. 89.

by the revolutionary changes in the life of the masses. As in all fields of spiritual life, here also were revealed the main opposing conceptions of language development in the revolutionary period. During this period there was an abundance of prolific pseudo-revolutionary vulgar ideas on the development of the language and literature of the time often borrowed from the arsenal of nihilistic and modernist trends.

To counterbalance these Lenin proceeded from principles of progressive linguistic science. In expounding questions concerning speech culture he based himself on genuine laws in the development of language, history and the contemporary period.

One must recall the currency given during the years immediately following the revolution to all kinds of pseudo-innovatory theories on the withering away of the old language of the classics and its replacement by a special language of the revolution and the attempts to carry through under the flag of renewal of the language absurd decadent affectations and so on. For all the variety of these pseudo-innovatory "theories", they were all united by the common initial proposition of the gap between language and thinking word and notion. This is a tendency not only of reactionary science, but of decadent modern art too. Typical of the decadents is the striving to deprive the word of its meaning, of any real content. This was characteristic of the Futurists in particular. In the opinion of some bourgeois scientists, language was created only for practical purposes and cannot correctly reflect the wealth of the world and of thought. Hence the opinion that all manner of abstract designations are more truthful than objective ones; hence also the suggestions and attempts to replace the living historically shaped language by all kinds of artificial languages, logical signs and so on; hence the theories of the modernists concerning some kind of "magic" function of the word and the attempts to justify meaningless phrases and all sorts of verbal vagaries.

Such interpretations of the nature of language in the modernistic schools of our day result from their common striving to "dematerialise" art. The modernistic artists and theoreticians see their main task in breaking up the objective notions of reality, or to use their own terminology in the necessity for proving the complete crisis of concreteness,

This is manifested in their renouncing not only the concreteness the living colours of genuine reality but also all real connections and even logic in human speech André Breton the founder of surrealism called for opposition to the existing manner of expressing thought for the abolition of syntax, for mixing up the existing order of words For all the modernists breaking up of the form of words is one of the ways in which an author manifests the primacy of his free will over reason over the principle of reality replacing the real image of life by subjectivist fictions

It is not by hazard that all decadent groups despite their variety have always attacked the language of classical literature its full blooded vitality which counterpoised their formalistic constructions abstracted from all genuine features of life

The Leninist definition of language as a means of intercourse between human beings is theoretically based on the principal advanced trend in the understanding of this problem in progressive world science It is opposed to the various irrational formalistic views Contradictions in the interpretation of the nature of language became particularly acute in the literature of the post revolutionary years which was characterised by exceptional intensity in the search for new paths and forms Considerable activity was displayed at this time by irrationalistic anti social conceptions of language which have sometimes been proclaimed innovatory even in our day

The representatives of irrationalist views of language usually plead the necessity for overcoming hackneyed style in thinking triteness in notions the levelling of man They see the main cause of the standardisation of language in reflection reason which they say do away with the natural essence of the object man's unity with nature Hence the different variants of the programme for creating new words and unusual combinations of words as the primary task of the artist directing his attention to the new life he must reject the old standards and create his own subjectively new language

Modernistic theoreticians associate the creation of a new language entirely with subjective aesthetic intuition with myth-creation which they claim, determines the new culture of the 20th century And the new myth-creating perception of the contemporary period is based in turn

upon the creation of a new language. From this follows the striving of modernistic writers for destruction of all language standards, extreme subjectivisation, divorce of form from content.

The judgements on language pronounced by Andrei Bely, a prominent representative of symbolism, amazingly anticipate the latest propositions of the formalistic school and some fashionable theories of our time.

The aim of poetry is the creation of language and language itself is the very creation of life relationships.

By attributing to the terminological significance of the word primary instead of accessory and subsidiary meaning, Bely continues developing his viewpoint, "we kill speech, that is the living word. Living speech is an eternally flowing creating activity which erects in front of us a series of images and myths. They are the instrument with which we penetrate darkness. Darkness being defeated, the images dissolve and the poetry of words vanishes, then we identify words as abstract concepts. We dissect living speech into concepts in order to tear them away from life, to crush them in thousands of volumes, to enclose them in the dust of archives and libraries, then living life, deprived of living words, becomes for us madness and chaos. Then comes the period of what is called degeneration. The cause of degeneration is the death of the living word, to fight degeneration is to create new words."¹

These judgements are of interest to us not in themselves, but because they curiously reflect the general trends of contemporary modernistic aesthetics. They are typical in their accentuated disdain for what is "democratic" accessible, "of universal significance" synonymous of insignificant, trivial associated with the standardised nature of the crowd's thinking with the "dictatorship of publicness." Genuinely artistic and contemporary in language, according to anti-realistic views, is only that which is deeply individual, not repeated, inaccessible to ordinary perception. This conception represents nothing but the projection into the linguistic sphere of the general thesis common to the modernistic trends, of a deeply personal, unreal and irrational character of genuinely contemporary

¹ A. Bely "The Magic of Words" in: *Sимволизм* Moscow 1910, pp. 434, 436 (in Russian).

modern art a character which is alien to any general significance. From this follows the tendency to destroy the national, communicative basis of language and the lexical and syntactical forms which have taken shape in it.

The nihilism of modernistic and formalistic trends in the field of language for all their variety are based on negation of the stability and objective meaning of the word. Such views serve as a premise for the constant efforts of modernistic writers to turn inside out the grammatical standards which have come to exist to deprive them of their general significance to give language an extremely complicated entirely subjective character.

All Lenin's utterances on language in the years immediately following the revolution were called forth by the urgent needs of the people's cultural enrichment, the necessity to fight for a fruitful democratic trend in literature. At that time because of the revival of anti-realistic culture the destructive modernistic tendencies began to be manifested with extraordinary acuteness in the sphere of language.

The symbolists doing away entirely with the material meaning of the word turned it into a conventional enrichment of unreal intuitive vision. The Futurists rejected all the achievements of classical poetical culture, all the historically accumulated wealth of the national language, and endeavoured to implant artificiality and abstruseness. The same trend was followed often enough by the not very literate experiments of the imagists and constructivists who rendered language lifeless by using all kinds of artificial linguistic constructions. Such experiments have been and still are presented to this day as the searchings of innovators. In reality only a few talented writers close to the modernistic groups overcame the destructive nihilistic character of the various anti-realistic programmes and utilised the true laws and possibilities of words in a new way.

Lenin's position on questions pertaining to language clearly exposes the meaning of the clash between the two basic tendencies in the development of the conversational and the literary language which emerged at the beginning of the 20th century and reached their peak in the years immediately following the October Revolution. As a counterweight to the anti-realistic outlook Lenin directed literature onto the path of creative utilisation and enrichment of the natural historical laws of language and of variety in

the live plastic possibilities of words in the field of meaning and expression

Problems of the history and theory of the literary language are inseparably linked with the development of social thought science the art of language and have immediate significance for the writer's practical creative work. The work and individuality of the writer his heroes themes and ideas are embodied in his language and can be apprehended only in it and through it. The intensive scientific study of problems concerning the language of literary works and writer's style must be considered as a great achievement of Soviet linguistics.

Any object including literature can be studied from different aspects. The problem of the literary language and style too can be approached from various points of view, in particular from that of the specific tasks of linguistics. This is done on a fairly broad scale in Soviet philology.

Increasingly acute in recent years has been the question of creating broad philosophical and aesthetic concepts of language associated with the general development of spiritual and artistic culture. The demand for a scientific theory of poetic speech of the aesthetics of words, their expressive potentialities and functions is felt all the more keenly as it is precisely here that lies hidden the key to the mystery of the transition from customary everyday, as we say, non-aesthetic material to the aesthetic quality of its figurative transformation its admission into the sphere of art. Here we have the key to the function of artistic creation in forming style the point of intersection as it were of the ideological and artistic principles of art where the writer's world outlook merges with the immediate concreteness and the figurative expressive possibilities of words.

Belles lettres is an art whose first element and basic instrument is words. Consequently Lenin's concern for the perfecting of the literary language is directly related to the work of the writer. Gorky, brushing a wonderful portrait of Lenin, mentions that he sometimes recalled an aphorism uttered one day by Arthur Schopenhauer: "He who thinks clearly expounds clearly."¹

Lenin's thoughts not only equip us with knowledge of the nature of language they also provide a scientific sub-

¹ M. Gorky, *Collected Works* Vol. 17, p. 21 (in Russian)

stantiation of its continuity development and perfecting Love for his native language, his native Russian tongue permeates all Lenin's utterances "We love our language and our country" Lenin wrote in his article On the National Pride of the Great Russians ¹

The classics of Russian literature have created an extremely rich language whose roots reach deep into the people's speech Take care of our language, our beautiful Russian language, that treasure that patrimony handed down to us by our predecessors among whom shines Pushkin! Treat this powerful instrument with respect, in skilful hands it is capable of accomplishing miracles ² says Turgenev's behest Lenin brilliantly defined the force and the significance of the language of classical Russian literature In a reply to the liberals he said 'We know better than you do that the language of Turgenev, Tolstoi, Dobrolyubov, and Chernyshevsky is a great and mighty one' ³

Words are action too ⁴ wrote Lenin with great conviction The short and precise definition of the significance of words given by Lenin rings in tune with the sayings of the classics the great masters of words of Gorky for instance "The writer while working at the same time turns action into words and words into action" ⁵

The simplicity and clarity, the concision and boldness of Lenin's literary style were always the result of a profound content According to Gorky's figurative classical formula Lenin's powerful reason was enveloped in simple clear words

The definition of words as action reveals the narrowness of the views which consider language only as a form of organisation of the content, a passive external envelope of the image The relationship between the image and language is far more complex Being a form language plays in *belles lettres* an active influencing role and to a certain extent sets the content itself in motion Many literati have spoken of the dual function of language while expressing thought

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works* Vol 21 p 103

² I S Turgenev *Collected Works* Vol 10 Moscow 1956 p. 357 (in Russian)

³ V I Lenin *Collected Works* Vol 20 p 72

⁴ Ibid Vol 9 p 70

⁵ M Gorky *Collected Works* Vol 26 p 410 (in Russian)

language at the same time provokes, stimulates and sets in motion thought itself

Lenin spoke of the necessity of compiling a dictionary of the contemporary Russian literary language. The consistency and persistence with which Lenin implemented that thought bear testimony to the significance he attached to questions of speech culture. He expressed this thought in his well known letter of January 18, 1920 to A. V. Lunacharsky. Lenin also wrote to M. N. Pokrovsky on "the necessity of publishing a good dictionary of the Russian language. Not like Dahl but a dictionary for use (and study) by all a dictionary so to speak of the classical contemporary Russian language (for example from Pushkin to Gorky perhaps)".¹ In another letter (to E. A. Litkens on May 19, 1924) Lenin pointed out that it should be a dictionary of "model and contemporary" Russian "with the new orthography".²

In the last decades great comprehensive work has been carried out in the Soviet Union to create model dictionaries of modern Russian. Soviet linguists have prepared and published various types of dictionaries. Much has been done in the field of the lexicography of the national languages of the peoples inhabiting the Soviet Union. In the Union and Autonomous Republics at first almost exclusively bilingual dictionaries were published, one of the languages being Russian. At present such dictionaries of the languages of practically all the nationalities in the Soviet Union exist in both variants with translation to and from Russian.

With time this work has acquired great scope. Dictionaries of the national languages have been or are being prepared. Now many of the peoples in this country have sufficiently complete dictionaries of their language. A great role in this field has been played by the experience in lexicographical theory and practice, the principles and methods of which have been and are still being developed in the process initiated by Lenin of preparing various types of dictionaries of the Russian language.

The great scope of Soviet linguists' work in this field is tangible evidence of the vital significance of the task set

¹ V. I. Lenin *Collected Works* Vol. 35, p. 447.

² Ibid. "p. 494.

by Lenin of compiling a dictionary of the Russian language from Pushkin to Gorky

When speaking of the importance of compiling a new dictionary of the mother tongue, Lenin expressed his opinion of Dahl's dictionary as a very valuable work, but regional and in many respects outdated

Of exceptional significance in this respect was what Lenin wrote about Dahl's dictionary in his letter of January 18, 1920 to Lunacharsky "It's a magnificent thing, but then it's a dictionary of *regional* terms and out of date Is it not time to produce a dictionary of the real Russian language, a dictionary, say, of words used nowadays and by the *classics* from Pushkin to Gorky?"¹ Here Lenin posed in all its scope the question of the necessity for setting a standard of the Russian language for enriching it, bringing it up to date, and at the same time of the impermissibility of cluttering it up with regional, local and slang words

Lenin's utterances on language and the laws of its development show how nonsensical are the formalistic attempts made by the symbolists, Futurists and imagists to carry out a "revolution in the language"

V I Lenin was severe towards various distortions of speech opposed the spoiling of the Russian language Of immense interest is his article "Stop Spoiling the Russian Language", the subtitle of which is "Some thoughts at leisure i.e., while listening to speeches at meetings "We are spoiling the Russian language" Lenin remarked "We are using foreign words unnecessarily And we use them incorrectly"

"A man who has recently learned to read in general, and to read newspapers in particular, will of course if he reads them diligently willy nilly absorb journalistic turns of speech However, it is the language of the newspapers that is beginning to suffer If a man who has recently learned to read uses foreign words as a novelty, he is to be excused but there is no excuse for a writer"²

As a rule the use of foreign words, and also of socio-philosophical and any other scientific terms, outside their real meaning is a result of inner passivity in speech and in general, combined with a propensity to follow any cur

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works*, Vol 35 p 434

² Ibid., Vol 30 p 298

rent stereotypes In Lenin's opinion the use of foreign words, if they are justified and viable, naturally becomes part of the people's language

The revolution introduced great changes in the vocabulary of the language and gave rise to an intensive process of word formation Lenin defended the necessity for organically including in the Russian language words created by the revolution which had become widespread not only in the languages of the peoples in the USSR but of the whole world In a speech made at the Petrograd People's House in 1919 he said We have succeeded in making the word Soviet intelligible in all languages

The masses have realised that their salvation lies in a workers and peasants government, in Soviets In the most remote corners, in some Italian Poshekhonye, farm labourers and workers gather together and declare, We greet the German Spartacists and the Russian Sovietists ¹ Lenin considered it unnecessary to look for a Russian equivalent of such a foreign progressive political term as dictatorship of the proletariat In his report to the Seventh Congress of Soviets he noted " The peasants now realise that while the words 'dictatorship of the proletariat' are perhaps too fancy Latin words, in practice they stand for that selfsame Soviet power which transfers the state apparatus to the workers "

From the aggregate of Lenin's judgements we see that he considered that the national languages exist and develop not independently of one another, but in mutual interaction and mutual enrichment on the basis of the real historical, social and spiritual links between peoples While opposing the unnecessary and incorrect use of foreign words, Lenin was also critical of tendencies towards artificial seclusion, limitation and archaising of the language A feature of Lenin's language is that its vocabulary contains many new foreign words reflecting new phenomena associated with the revolutionary period Such words have come to stay in literature and in the everyday speech of hundreds of millions of people

It must be remembered that the struggle waged by Lenin and progressive writers for the purity of the Russian language

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works* Vol 29 p 53

² Ibid, Vol. 30 p 229

has always been of enormous fundamental significance in the development of literature and closely associated with the general question of artistic form. This struggle began in the first years of Soviet literature, when the Proletkult group and the Futurists began to attack the realistic progressive traditions of classical literature.

While the Party called on artists to adopt a simplicity and clarity of form easily understood by the masses, the opponents of realism engaged in spreading the principles of intricacy in form. For their part, the adherents of the Proletkult and the Futurists, who adopted a nihilistic attitude to the culture of the past, drew literature onto the path of a depersonalised abstract cosmic language devoid of natural live colouring and poor in meaning. The principles of clarity in form and the classical traditions of Russian literature were opposed on the other hand by the naturalists who under the slogan of defending the earthy force, fouled the language with ugly and provincial words.

Writers responded readily to Lenin's article *Stop Spoiling the Russian Language* which touched upon an extremely urgent question. In his article *The Purity of the Russian Language* Alexei Tolstoi remarked: "As for the introduction of foreign words into Russian speech, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin is right: there is no need to reject them; there is no need to abuse them. A certain percentage of foreign words is growing into the language. And in each case the artist's instinct must determine this measure of foreign words, the necessity for them."

V. I. Lenin, basing himself on the achievements of advanced linguistics, demanded the establishment of a standard of speech in the interests of the people's cultural development. On the contrary, irrational linguistics, considering language as a kind of sphere shut up in itself, rejected and still rejects speech standards even the rules of grammar. Only in disregard of all definitions and linguistic standards have the representatives of linguistic irrationalism always seen the way of overcoming standardisation of thought and notions, the possibility for creating new spiritual values. All these theories formerly found and still find expression in *belles lettres* and even often appear under the banner of revolutionary innovatory transformation of syntax and word making.

The anti realist views on the nature of literature arise from impoverishment or complete negation of the aesthetic functions of language. Whereas in realistic literature the possibilities of the national language are enriched and broadened through their aesthetic function, modernistic notions, on the contrary debilitate them. Depriving language of its meaning and the immediate empirical concrete content they erode its expressive force and the unlimited possibilities of words for creating images and making characters either typical or individual in their speech.

V. I. Lenin displayed no inclination to recommend copying old forms; he stressed the necessity for taking into account the historical development of the literary language, the appearance in it of all kinds of constructions, the dying out of old speech forms.

In affirming the link of the revolution in the Russian language with the names of Pushkin, Turgenev, Dobrolyubov, and Gorky, Lenin stressed the prominent role of writers in the formation of the literary language and the development of speech culture. Lenin pointed out the positive influence exerted by literature on the national language. At the same time he clearly differentiated genuine progress in the language from all varieties of vulgar pseudo-transformations of speech conflicting with its natural laws. The work of the great writers was effective in enriching the people's speech culture largely because they proceeded from the laws of the Russian language, revealed its genuinely progressive new tendencies and correctly defined the paths and standards for its further development. From Lenin's judgements we may conclude that writers can play a fruitful part in improving the language on the basis of their creative insight into the nature of the real processes in its natural evolution.

Lenin's clear distinction between genuine progress of the conversational and literary language and various kinds of speculative pseudo-transformations suggests serious conclusions not only for artistic creation, but also for linguistics. The history of the past decades contains many an example of fruitless, artificial reforms of orthography not based on the language's natural evolution processes. The authors of such linguistic projects were unable to single out the genuinely real, truly characteristic features in the development of the language. Only those orthography reforms

have been and will be really effective and viable which standardise genuinely new processes in the historical advance of the language

Soviet linguistics has done considerable work in the various spheres of theory and modern practice of language culture and development. But as time elapses the lag in elaborating theoretical questions in general linguistics is becoming more noticeable. Soviet linguistics still has few major works devoted to deep-going research into vital questions of stylistics, the language of *belles lettres*, the culture and standardisation of speech, which are becoming more and more urgent.

The language of literature, which exerts an immense unifying and standardising influence on popular speech, is at the same time unable to develop if it has no link with its main source — the live conversational speech of the time. The mutual relationship between popular conversational speech and the literary language underlies their constant enrichment and improvement. Those reforms of orthographic standardisation which do not take into account the spirit and real logic of the language's progress are scientifically inconsistent and speculative. In particular the problem of the correlation between orthography and pronunciation can be solved in the process of the language's natural historical development.

In questions relating to the standardisation of the written and the spoken language it is more justifiable to follow the traditions of progressive Russian classical literature. V. G. Belinsky wrote: "It is impossible to create a language, for its creator is the people, the philologists only discover its laws and draw them up into a system, and writers only create in the language according to its laws."¹ On the subject of the people as the creator of the language Maxim Gorky said with great inspiration: "The language is created by the people. The division of the language into literary and popular means only that we have so to speak a raw language and a language processed by masters. The first to have a splendid understanding of this was Pushkin, he too was the first to show how the people's speech material should be used, how it should be processed."²

¹ V. G. Belinsky *Collected Works* Ed. by S. A. Vengerov Vol. 1 p. 333 (in Russian)

² M. Gorky, *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, 1953 p. 491 (in Russian)

Every great writer is an innovator in the art of words opening new paths in literature and language. But every genuine artistic innovation arises from perspicacious and sensitive insight into the depths of the nature of language, into its living dynamics, into the secrets of the inexhaustible possibilities of words.

In his pronouncements on language, particularly his instructions for the publication of a model dictionary of the classical contemporary language, Lenin had first and foremost in mind the standardisation of language. Gorky's militant fundamental articles against the spoiling of the literary language still preserve their significance today.

Under the banner of innovation in the life of art, old, long since antiquated phenomena are often enough resurrected.

Calls for "dynamism", "laconicism", "conciseness" are not new precisely they formed the leitmotiv of all the Futurist, LEFist, formalistic and Proletkult pronouncements on literature in the twenties, and were always the main weapon of these trends against realism. The journals of those years abounded in attacks against realism, which was alleged to be long winded and wordy, far behind the mad speeds of contemporary life. 'Wordiness is the general failing of literature in the past, and of it the new proletarian literature must free itself, this is dictated by the conditions of modern purposeful and feverish life. Economy of time for people of labour is of great significance.' The concepts of "dynamism", "laconicism", and "conciseness" were presented as the theoretical bases of the attempts made by the formalists to cast aspersions on the best works of Soviet literature. It is useful to recall Lenin's remarks on the article 'On the Ideological Front' written by one of the leaders of the Proletkult, V. Pletnev, who put across the idea that the language of Russian classical literature was obsolete. Pletnev wrote: 'The impetuosity of the revolution is already now giving our language a new content, smashing its noble classical forms. Our vocabulary, submitting to the pace of life, is becoming telegraphically precise and curt, condensing the content of the words to a gigantic extent. Try to translate into the old noble Russian of Oblomov the couple of words: electrification, radioactivity, and in them we easily associate the incommensurable scale of phenomena in the economic, technical and scientific fields. This intro

duces enormous transformations into the content, into the form of literary creation and its purpose." In his remarks Lenin expressed a negative attitude to such expatiations on some kind of new 'telegraphically precise' language to the nihilistic negation of the old literary language as the language of Oblomov. Such vulgarising views stem from mechanically transferring political formulas and the laws of physics and technology to the field of language.

The supporters of "expressiveness" reject as "old trash" the inexhaustible artistic arsenal of realism. Throwing out the forms of realistic portrayal on the pretext that they are obsolete, the lovers of "laconicism" in reality impoverish art and replace it by miserable stereotypes. Disregarded are such aspects of art as breadth in epically embracing life, depth of social and psychological characterisation, and other achievements of classical realism. The apologia of "dynamism", "economy", and other similar orientations as universal ones is extremely contradictory in its concrete meaning. One can hardly consider frantic oscillation between infatuation with 'conventional forms' and the methods of neo realism as a sign of modern innovation in art.

With the problem set in this way, such basic principles of Soviet literature as truthfulness and depth in reflecting reality, ideological consistency and popular nature are nearly always relegated to the background. Attention is centred on the notion of "conventional" art, which is passed off as the main criterion of modern artistic innovation.

Infatuation for "conventional", "laconic" solutions leads in practice to negation of realistic forms, to artistic impoverishment of the figurative language of art. Laconicism, dynamism and convention can fulfil their artistic function only when organically linked with the principle of truth of life, in subordination to the task of depicting the world in all its wealth.

Lenin drew a distinct line between imagery in language, expressiveness and originality in style on one hand and decadent mannerisms, all sorts of fashionable literary grimacing on the other. He was ironical in his opinion of the unnecessary turns of phrase which "so captivate decadents".¹ He rejected mannerisms and verbal contrivances in literature as well as external signs of erudition which

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works*, Vol 5 p 152

cluttered up the essence of the matter with learned trash

Lenin fought against affectation and deliberate vagueness of speech, against 'juggling with words'. Pretentious expressions in political literature or *belles lettres*, Lenin used to say are always associated with vagueness or falseness of thought. Lenin criticised anybody who 'strikes a pose, juggles with words, but says nothing. I don't care whether he calls himself a writer, a scholar, or anything else' ¹. The more ill defined, petty or distorted the thinking of a man of letters, his notions of life, the more strongly does he strive to amaze by anything that is completely unusual, particular, not to be found in others.

Genuine art is always modest, but counterfeits require embellishment. It is true that affected art as a rule pleases a large group of formalists, but that is the limit of its short existence. Even talented writers, to use Pushkin's words, "who have exhausted their strength in polishing off their verse, who are more concerned about the mechanism of the language, the outward forms of words than about the thought, are doomed to oblivion."

V I Lenin displayed constant concern for irreproachable literary quality of works to be printed. "I think the subject was well chosen and has been correctly elaborated, but the article will need some polishing up" ². Lenin pointed out to V M Kasparov (late June of 1913).

Lenin proceeded from the thought of the necessity to enhance the culture of the masses. This requires skill and profound content in literary art. An author's disregard for the language, in whichever form it was expressed, whether plain negligence or affected elegant trickery, was unconditionally rejected by Lenin. A slovenly attitude to the literary language bears witness not only to unfitness of those guilty of it for literary work, but moreover to their inadequate awareness, to their disregard for the basic cultural values.

Is it not time to declare war on the mangling of the Russian language? Lenin wrote in the article "Stop Spoiling the Russian Language". He mocked indignantly at heavy style, condemning every mutilation of the language.

Writers who pay no attention to the historical enrichment of the language inevitably lag behind the growth of the

¹ Ibid, Vol 29 p 358.

² Ibid, Vol 36, p. 260

people's spiritual culture For instance, the language of collective farmers changes as a result of the socialist transformation of the countryside It is enriched with the powerful stream of socio-political and general literary vocabulary The linguistic isolation of individual areas and regions disappears With the growth of general culture of speech, the dialectical division of the old countryside becomes a thing of the past The standards of literary speech, spreading everywhere, become the masses' permanent possession

Some contemporary authors think that the only way to improve the written speech of our time consists in a return to its ground root, organic condition This is a return to the written speech of what they consider as unjustly forgotten words which have been squeezed out by education, the deliberate use by authors of words, which, though they no longer survive in modern conversational language, can be used by writers

Supporters of this view invoke only Dahl Indeed, Dahl collected treasures of Russian speech, and his articles contain much that is interesting about the development process of written and spoken speech in past centuries But Lenin, while highly assessing Dahl's dictionary, nevertheless described it as "regional And views which are limited to this material inevitably incline towards a one-sided approach to problems concerning modern written speech

Any attempts at artificially resurrecting various kinds of archaic, local and jargonic speech today also lead to falseness or spiritual stagnation in literature

With Lenin the problem of language as applied to broad processes in literature is always a problem of man, of a social or psychological type He further develops and interprets in an all round and exacting manner the well known formula "Style is the man"

Lenin associated the height of literary skill with expressiveness and precision of language Here the language appears as a mighty instrument for revealing the distinctive features of the man Searches for expressive words serve the purpose of truthfully conveying the live image of reality General, colourless words do not convey the distinguishing features of a vital phenomenon, the individuality of a hero The art of the writer consists first and foremost in the ability to portray live characters in words in such a way that the

reader will see and imagine them as really existing people. Therein mainly lies the significance of genuine artists' careful search for the most appropriate words to convey exactly the essence of a phenomenon and its individual features

Inherent in the modernistic trends of our day is a general tendency to "dehumanise" language, to detach it from the individual content of literature. This is a specific manifestation of the general process of dematerialisation and dehumanisation of art proclaimed by theoreticians of modernism as one of the basic expressions of artistic innovation of our day

Karl Marx objected to naturalism in language when he rejected any direct connection between the name of objects and the objects themselves. "The name of a thing," he wrote, "is something distinct from the qualities of that thing. I know nothing of a man by knowing that his name is Jacob. In the same way with regard to money, every trace of a value-relation disappears in the names pound, dollar, franc, ducat, etc." ¹

Scientific materialistic linguistics, perceiving the word as the reality of thought, nevertheless by no means identifies the word with the object and the concept. The concept represents the reflection of the essence of objects and the phenomena in the reality surrounding man and for that reason is closely linked with them. Words are their conventional designations. The materialistic theory of reflection affirms that man's notions of the objects in the surrounding world do not exist without their verbal designations. But it does not place a sign of equality between the notions and the words expressing them.

Most of the modernistic trends, on the contrary, are characterised by a propensity to linguistic naturalism, to identify the phenomenon and the word, inasmuch as the intermediary essence of meaning is rejected.

Lenin's treatment of questions concerning language usually has, besides the characterisation of the hero in a literary work, another substantial aspect: revelation of the creative countenance of the writer himself. The peculiarity of his language, his intellectual, emotional and expressive specifics serve also to elucidate the author's social and

¹ Karl Marx, *Capital*, Moscow, 1965, Vol. 1, p. 100

artistic individuality Through the verbal, figurative fabric of the work we can always see the distinguishing features of the author's personality, the peculiarities of his world outlook, his attitude to life, his social and professional make-up

Lenin gave a brilliant speech characterisation of the works of Chernov, one of the leaders of the Socialist Revolutionary Party, who had a propensity to sonorous colourful phrases serving to conceal inconsistency of thought In order to set in relief the distinctive traits of Chernov's countenance, Lenin compares him with Voroshilov, the eloquent but inactive hero of Turgenev's novel *Smoke* "Dear Mr Chernov!" Lenin says ironically "How wonderfully he resembles Turgenev's Voroshilov you remember him in *Smoke*, the young Russian *Privatdocent* who went on a tour abroad This Voroshilov was a very taciturn young man but now and again he would break his silence and pour forth scores and hundreds of the most learned of names, the rarest of the rare Chernov behaves in exactly the same manner ¹

Instead of addressing themselves to the masses, clearly and sensibly, as befits a revolutionary, telling about the substance of the matter, "the Voroshilovs" prefer to effuse a veritable stream of scientific names in the domains of agronomics political economy critical philosophy, etc., and thus bury essentials under this scientific lumber ²

The individual features of the opportunist Kautsky serve Lenin as the key to his social and psychological essence, and also to recreate a generalised type of the international opportunist

The leitmotiv, the determining feature of Lenin's entire characterisation of Kautsky is his tendency to repeat again and again generally known doctrines In the article "Collapse of the Second International", Lenin compares him to the "man in a muffler" who "shrugs off facts with an air of extraordinary smugness, and with the aid of saccharine phrases" ³

Kautsky is compared with another satirical personage from Chekhov the gymnasium teacher Ippolit Ippolitych

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works* Vol 5 p 151

² Ibid p 152

³ Ibid Vol 21, p 224

Ryzhitsky from the story "The Teacher of Literature". This limited and tedious man "was famous" in his town for always saying only what was already "long since general knowledge". Lenin compared Kautsky's empty phrases, laying claim to Marxist truth with the "profound repetition of hackneyed truths which Chekhov's Ippolit Ippolitych loved to reiterate on every occasion. "Undoubtedly, this goes 'without saying' just as the fact that horses eat oats or the Volga flows into the Caspian. Only it is a pity that an empty and bombastic phrase about the deep-going struggles is used to avoid question of vital importance to the revolutionary proletariat namely *what makes its revolution deep-going*' in relation to the state, to democracy, as distinct from previous non proletarian revolutions"¹

So far there has been little study of the remarkable characterisations given by Lenin of representatives of the various parties and political groups. By means of precise characterisations Lenin raises them to kinds of socio political types. He defines by peculiarities of speech the characteristic traits of the revolutionary, the Black Hundred member, the bureaucrat, the liberal, the Menshevik, the Cadet. From Lenin's characterisation of one political group or other there often emerges the psychological countenance of a man, expressed in his most typical traits. Thus in the wrathful sarcastic exposure of the tsarist minister of the Interior Sipyagin's chancellory style the image of the tsarist official is outlined with his inner sluggishness his striving to hide the truth. Lenin characterised the style of one circular of this highly placed bureaucrat as "the grand style of the chancelleries, with periods thirty six lines long in a 'jargon' that makes the heart bleed for our native Russian language. As you read deeply into this effusion, you feel as though you were in a Russian police-station with its musty walls and its all pervading specific stench, in which the officials personify in their appearance and bearing the most case-hardened bureaucracy, while in the courtyard, visible through the window, gloomy buildings loom reminiscent of the torture chamber"²

Lenin's high artistic demands stemmed from his views on the exceptional significance of literature. The writer's

¹ Ibid, Vol 25 p 480

² Ibid, Vol 5, pp 231-32.

language reflects the character of his artistic thinking, his attitude to his work, the level of his consciousness, and his artistic qualifications

It is not difficult to acquire a smooth literary language but that will never replace genuine insight into life and live feeling. Art cannot suffer colourless repetitions.

Lev Tolstol described the smooth literary language which we refer to as a "pleasant style" and about the author of which we say "he can write as "very poor language" ¹ What is the use of pleasant smoothness if there is not a single deeply felt image, personage or picture? And worst of all when there seems to be a picture, when there seems to be something described, but in actual fact it is all taken from others. Such literature is unnerving and accustoms one to speak in words without any sense or images.

N. K. Krupskaya recalls that Lenin used to object when some editors tried to trim all correspondence and articles to the same pattern, so that thoughts were expressed with the same phrases. "It would do you no harm to fear less that the author of a signed article should express himself in his own way" ² She tells us that Lenin used to point out "When everything is trimmed according to the same pattern, when live correspondence is transposed into official language, the material loses its interest" ³

As an editor Lenin "restricted himself to an absolute minimum of necessary corrections", ⁴ trying to preserve the individual peculiarities of the author's language and style. After looking through A. V. Lunacharsky's booklet on Stuttgart (1908), Lenin gave his opinion in a letter to the author "We all thought it unnecessary to 'correct' it. It would have been a pity to mar your vivid and lively style" ⁵

Lenin's attention to questions concerning the literary language shows the urgent necessity for broader and fuller study of the specific laws of the literary art, the peculiarities of the verbal image, and first and foremost the interaction of content and language form. It is particularly essential to discover the secret of the transition from everyday to artistic language, how a word acquires its artistic function.

¹ L. N. Tolstol *Collected Works*, Vol. 8, 1936, p. 286 (in Russian)

² *Lenin Miscellany III*, p. 386 (in Russian)

³ *Bolshevistskaya pechat*, No. 10, 1935, pp. 5-6

⁴ V. Karpinsky "Lenin the Editor" in *Recollections of Lenin*, p. 68

⁵ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 43, p. 179

' The artistic possibilities of words, the imagery of the language in literary works, are achieved by widely varying speech means. However, Lenin's treatment of the mutual relations between language and the various forms of human cognition directs attention towards the main, most characteristic means of artistic expression, to figurative meaning, to the creative use of various word combinations. To reveal the inexhaustible possibilities of words as regards meaning and imagery is one of the basic tasks of poetics. Immense also is the potential force of various creative contexts of the use of words determining new artistic discoveries.

An important place in Marxist aesthetics goes to theoretically grounding the inexhaustible artistic possibilities of words. According to Ludwig Feuerbach, the name of an object "is a mark of difference, a striking characteristic, which I make the character, the representative, of the object in order thereby to represent it to myself in its totality." Quoting those words, Lenin remarked "Bien dit!" The name of an object calls forth its total image in our imagination. The word, however, is not simple and single in its meaning. It manifests itself in various facets and sometimes acquires another meaning in a context with other words. The word contains the particular and the general, the germ of the concept and of the image. Besides its usual meaning the word also has inexhaustible, truly magical potential powers of expression, which are revealed by the artist. And the greater his talent, the greater the possibilities of words he discovers. Properly speaking that is precisely what we mean by the expressive plastic art of the literary artist.

V

LENIN AND PROBLEMS IN THE HISTORY OF LITERATURE

LITERATURE AND THE MOVEMENT OF THE POPULAR MASSES

The ideas of Marxism Leninism are a reliable foundation for building a scientific history of literature. Lenin's judgements and articles on Russian writers Radishchev, Herzen, Belinsky, Dobrolyubov, Chernyshevsky, Nekrasov, Saltykov-Shchedrin, Lev Tolstoi, and Gorky are programme documents of Marxist literary criticism. Taken in connection with Lenin's general conception, they characterise in a new way the principal features in the development of Russian literature, the class content of literary trends, their historical connections and continuity. Lenin's conception of the basic periods in the Russian liberation movement, his appraisals of the political and artistic work of the revolutionaries of the sixties, his characterisation of Narodism, his teaching on imperialism, on the paths and motive forces of the socialist revolution, are the key to understanding the laws governing the history of literature. Lenin's teaching on the cultural revolution opened the road for the development of Soviet art and literature, helped to establish the correct attitude to the artistic values of the past and the present.

Among the greatest contributions made by Lenin was the scientific grounding of progressive Russian literature's links with the people's liberation movement. V. I. Lenin revealed the immense role of the masses in all progressive creative activity. In his work "Karl Marx" he wrote: "The discovery of the materialist conception of history, or more correctly, the consistent continuation and extension of materialism into the domain of social phenomena, removed the two chief shortcomings in earlier historical theories. In the

first place, the latter at best examined only the ideological motives in the historical activities of human beings, without investigating the origins of those motives, or ascertaining the objective laws governing the development of the system of social relations, or seeing the roots of these relations in the degree of development reached by material production, in the second place the earlier theories did not embrace the activities of the *masses* of the population whereas historical materialism made it possible for the first time to study with scientific accuracy the social conditions of the life of the masses, and the changes in those conditions"¹ The activities of the popular masses are with Lenin the points of departure in studying all aspects of social life, including literature. And a number of most important problems in the history of literature found their best grounded solution in the light of Lenin's ideas on the link of art with the popular moods and yearnings. The dialectical character of the link between the people's life and literature is revealed in Lenin's thoughts on the necessity for taking into account first and foremost the "activities of the masses of the population".

The problem of the historical role of the people has a long history in Russian criticism and social thought. It is exceptionally important here to consider the views held by the revolutionary democrats Belinsky, Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov, who provided the most consistent grounding in last century's Russian literature for the significance of themes from the people's life.

As a counterweight to the views dominating in the last century, the revolutionary democrats concluded that the people is the principal agent in history. They wrote with bitterness that tsarism and feudal ownership had doomed the people to darkness and oppression and shackled the creative energy of the masses. The classics of revolutionary democratic criticism proceeded from the conviction that great transformations are impossible without the activity of the popular masses. The greatness of outstanding historical personages, in the views of the revolutionary democrats, is entirely determined by how correctly they interpret what lives unrealised in the masses.

Contrary to the idea, which was widespread at the time, that popular risings were "senseless and pitiless mutinies ,

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works* Vol 21 p 56

Chernyshevsky saw the struggle of the masses against the oppressors as a most powerful factor in society's forward movement. Without the movement of the popular masses he could not conceive any historical progress.

The thought of the people's growing importance in history testifies that the progressive, revolutionary democratic views in Russia were developing towards historical materialism. But since the revolutionary democrats' views of history were still in the main idealistic, they could not finally solve the problem of the role of the masses and of individuals, of the real historical causes of the people's strength and weakness or discover the concrete historical paths to the future. They stopped short of historical materialism.

Marxism-Leninism gives a firm materialistic basis for solving the question of the people's role in social development. Lenin tirelessly exposed efforts to belittle the role of the people in any way, revealed the bourgeois landowner character of the various pseudo theories which gave currency to the opinion that the working masses were inferior. He opposed to the inventions of the reactionary ideologists the profoundly grounded thought of the popular masses' love of freedom, their inexhaustible creative powers. Not a single historical personage before Lenin revealed so fully the greatness of the people's labour and struggle, its role as the creator of history. In the tensest period of the young Soviet state's life, Lenin affirmed: "Victory will be on the side of the exploited, for on their side is life, numerical strength, the strength of the mass, the strength of the inexhaustible sources of all that is selfless, dedicated and honest, all that is surging forward and awakening to the building of the new, all the vast reserves of energy and talent latent in the so-called 'common people', the workers and peasants."¹ It is precisely deep down in the working people's life that the main sources of truth, ideal content and the popular character of art are found.



Lenin's teaching on the determining role of the popular masses in history is of fundamental significance for constructing a scientific history of literature. When we consider

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 403.

literature from this angle, we discover in it positive and negative, progressive and reactionary tendencies, the inconsistency of the different variants of the "theory" that literature develops in a single stream becomes obvious. V I Lenin proved that in a class society divided by social contradictions there can be no single national art, no single national literature. "The *elements* of democratic and socialist culture," Lenin wrote, "are present, if only in rudimentary form, in *every* national culture, since in *every* nation there are toiling and exploited masses, whose conditions of life inevitably give rise to the ideology of democracy and socialism. But *every* nation also possesses a bourgeois culture (and most nations a reactionary and clerical culture as well) in the form, not merely of elements, but of the *dominant* culture" ¹

In the old society, Lenin pointed out, there have always been progressive forces expressing the strivings of the people. They create elements of democratic and socialist culture still in the womb of the old society. Lenin teaches us to distinguish progressive phenomena and traditions in literature from reactionary ones. His attitude to such conflicting phenomena as progressive, realistic literature and decadent literature shows the difference in the social nature of these literary streams. Lenin gave an exact class characterisation of works of landowner literature in the last century, of the reactionary novels published in the *Russky Vestnik*, "portraying high minded Marshals of the Nobility, good natured and contented muzhiks, and disgruntled brutes, scoundrels and monsters called revolutionaries" ²

Lenin's judgements on these novels throw light on the real meaning of the anti revolutionary trends in nineteenth century Russian literature. Great principledness both in uncompromising rejection of what is reactionary and in militant assertion of what is progressive and truthful distinguishes all Lenin's pronouncements on literature.

Lenin's definition of the people's role in the development of literature shatters all forms of vulgar sociology which nihilistically devaluates the artistic legacy of the past. We have brilliantly and profoundly revealed to us the

¹ Ibid, Vol. 20, p. 24

² Ibid, Vol. 18, p. 317

significance of the activity of great personages in culture who exerted a powerful influence on the consciousness of the peoples and promoted their historical forward movement.

The names of Radishchev, the Decembrists, the revolutionaries of the seventies, M. Gorky, embody in Lenin's work the people's radical striving for liberation, its national self-consciousness. "To us it is most painful," he wrote, "to see and feel the outrages, the oppression and the humiliation our fair country suffers at the hands of the tsar's butchers, the nobles and the capitalists. We take pride in the resistance to these outrages put up from our midst, from the Great Russians, in *that* midst having produced Radishchev, the Decembrists, the revolutionary commoners of the seventies, in the Great Russian working class having created, in 1905, a mighty revolutionary party of the masses, and in the Great Russian peasantry having begun to turn towards democracy and set about overthrowing the clergy and the landed proprietors."¹ These words are taken from Lenin's article "On the National Pride of the Great Russians." The work and the ideas of the progressive Russian writers expressed the essence of the nation's consciousness, its historical movement.

Lenin consistently reveals the entire development of literature in its relationship to the people's life, first and foremost in connection with the liberation movement. He pursues this basic principle proceeding from all the complexity of class relationships. He reveals the real historical dialectics of this connection in the conception of the three stages of the Russian liberation movement. Describing the role of progressive people from various classes in the liberation movement of the Decembrist nobles, the commoners and the proletarian revolutionaries, Lenin first of all correlates them to the life of the popular masses. And if the weakness of the Decembrists lay in their being remote from the people, the basic source of the proletarian revolutionaries' strength was that they headed the movement of the very masses. In Russia literature has always been associated with the liberation movement and with other decisive events in the country's national and historical existence. The liberation movement of the nineteenth century quickly

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 21, p. 103.

became democratic, its social composition changed as time went by

Lenin's proposition concerning the main periods in the Russian liberation movement provides the key to understanding of the ideas contained in Russian literature and social thought, the basis of their scientific division into periods and the continuity in the development of liberation ideas in Russia. Lenin brilliantly defined the social content of Russian literature, its "world significance"

The fullest and most comprehensive exposition of Lenin's proposition concerning the three periods in the Russian liberation movement is given in his articles "From the History of Workers' Press in Russia" and "The Role of Social Estates and Classes in the Liberation Movement". The first period in the liberation movement in Russia was the period of the nobility (1825-1861), which led to a crucial turn in literature too. The political and literary views of the Decembrists were inseparable from the surge of the Russian people's patriotic consciousness connected with the Patriotic War of 1812. It was precisely in the years when the popular forces attained wide scope that the wave of liberation struggle rose which brought forward the Decembrists. These, Lenin said quoting Herzen, are a "phalanx of heroes reared, like Romulus and Remus, on the milk of a wild beast. They were veritable titans, hammered out of pure steel from head to foot, comrades-in-arms who deliberately went to certain death in order to awaken the young generation to a new life and to purify the children born in an environment of tyranny and servility"¹. The literature of this period is represented by the prose of the Decembrists, the works of Pushkin, Lermontov and Herzen.

The second decisive turning point in the life of Russian literature, which began immediately after the heroic defence of Sevastopol, was headed by the revolutionary democrats Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov, Nekrasov, and Saltykov-Shchedrin. Their activity is associated with the second period in the Russian liberation movement, that of the commoners. Finding themselves in the broad stream of progressive Russian culture, the members of the liberation movement enriched the people's culture, preserving what

¹ V. I. Lenin *Collected Works* Vol 18 p 25

was most valuable in the past Russian literature by this time was flourishing as never before. The exceptional significance of Russian literature in European culture during the last century was noted by Engels when he wrote about "the historical and critical school in Russian literature, which is infinitely superior to anything produced in this line in Germany and France by official historical science."¹ In a letter to Paul Ernst, Engels stated that not a single state at the end of the last century could boast of such a flowering in the field of literature as Russia was then enjoying.

The third, most mighty period in the Russian liberation movement, the one which had the most significant consequences for the life of the country—the proletarian period—was headed by the Communist Party and Lenin. On the borderline between the historical periods loomed the grand figure of Maxim Gorky. The socialist revolution was carried out. The great Russian literature revealed still more deeply and comprehensively its world historical significance.

In 1912 Lenin wrote "In commemorating Herzen, we clearly see the three generations, the three classes, that were active in the Russian revolution. At first it was nobles and landlords, the Decembrists and Herzen. These revolutionaries formed but a narrow group. They were very far removed from the people. But their effort was not vain. The Decembrists awakened Herzen. Herzen began the work of revolutionary agitation."

"This work was taken up, extended, strengthened, and tempered by the revolutionary *raznochintsy* from Chernyshevsky to the heroes of *Narodnaya Volya*. The range of fighters widened, their connection with the people became closer. The young helmsmen of the gathering storm' is what Herzen called them. But it was not yet the storm itself."

"The storm is the movement of the masses themselves. The proletariat, the only class that is thoroughly revolutionary, rose at the head of the masses and for the first time aroused millions of peasants to open revolutionary struggle. The first onslaught in this storm took place in 1905. The next is beginning to develop under our very eyes."²

This passage from Lenin brings out the historical continuity of the stages in the liberation movement and the

¹ K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, Moscow 1956 p. 450

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 18, p. 31

ideas of Russian social thought Lenin's conception provides the historian of nineteenth-century Russian literature with a reference point for solving many complex and important questions in the history of social thought in Russia at that time

The content and spirit of Lenin's works rejects every kind of dogmatism in utilising any propositions, even the most correct in themselves Unfortunately books and articles often use Lenin's propositions in a one-sided and dogmatic fashion when elucidating the laws of the literary process Lenin's proposition concerning the three stages in the liberation movement in Russia is of fundamental importance in the periodisation of Russian literature in the 19th 20th centuries But as in utilising any classical proposition of Marxism Leninism, it is necessary here to adopt a creative approach and to take into account Lenin's views as a whole on the historical process in the literature of the 19th and 20th centuries The division of the history of the Russian liberation movement into three periods presupposes least of all a simplified, mechanical subordination of all the complex phenomena in literature to ready made sociological definitions

However, in many books and articles on the history of 19th 20th century Russian literature the periodisation has been effected by mechanical and dogmatic borrowing of the one single proposition, taken in isolation, on the three stages in the Russian liberation movement, while the other aspects of Lenin's historical conception, and the most important Lenin's methodology itself have been forgotten Hence the tendency to include everything that was progressive in the history of literature from 1825 to 1861 under the definition of the nobility period in the revolution, and all that was progressive from 1861 to 1895 under the characterisation of revolutionary democracy In actual fact such sociological schemes have little in common with Lenin's periodisation, in which the leading class forces in the Russian liberation movement and their influence on the development of literature are defined

The one-sided mechanical application of the proposition concerning the three stages in the Russian liberation movement always results in such simplified schemes being at variance with the facts in the history of literature The first cause of the great discordance is the striving to see

all the complex literary processes of the first half of the last century only as expressing the liberation movement of the nobility. The live literary process presupposes the emergence and development of definite trends. A literary phenomenon does not appear ready made but goes through the stages of emerging, flowering and fading away. For this reason the chronological limits of each historical period do not always coincide with the real course of literary development. The Decembrist ideas matured and were expressed in literature before 1825, the year from which Lenin dates the period of the nobility liberation movement. It was before 1825 that the works of Pushkin, Ryleyev, Kuchelbecker and others, which embody most fully the ideas of the Decembrists, appeared. If we examine the substance of the matter we see that after the Decembrist rising there was already a re-appraisal of the past, disappointment of some and intensive search for more correct paths of liberation by others.

The mechanical division of literary phenomena according to the periods cited oversimplifies the picture of the historico-literary process and gives rise to an artificial division of writers' creative development. One cannot fail to see already in the first half of the 19th century the emergence of a whole group of authors who were commoners. The period of the nobility has no place for such major figures as Herzen and Belinsky, who travelled a complicated path and incorporated in their political and literary biographies the transition from one historical stage in the development of Russian society to another, and in the first place from abstract protest to the ideology of revolutionary democratism. It is vitally necessary in the present case to take into account the aggregate of Lenin's views on historical development, referring to Herzen and Belinsky, Lenin affirms that already in the forties Russian social thought engaged on the path which was to lead it to Marxism.

The maturing of the revolutionary democratic ideas and their expression in literature and aesthetics can be traced back to the forties. This is known to be the period during which appeared Belinsky's articles marking his transition to the positions of consistent revolutionary democratism. It is sufficient to refer to such outstanding documents of revolutionary democratic thought as a *Survey of Russian Literature of 1847* and the *'Letter to N. V. Gogol'*, written

in the same year Chernyshevsky defended his famous thesis in 1855. All Dobrolyubov's articles were written before 1861. Consequently, literary criticism guided by Lenin's historical concept must direct its attention to bringing out the real historical logic of literature, seeing the emergence and development of phenomena, comprehending them in their mutual interconnection.

Our literary thought has by no means fully revealed the real complexity of the reflection of the liberation ideas in the given historical periods and of their connections with all the various literary trends.

Usually the years 1861-1895 are treated only on the plane of the revolutionary commoners line in literature. Actually significant as this literature is, it does not reflect all the wealth of the literary process at the given stage. At that same period there were outstanding realistic writers outside the revolutionary democratic movement. Mechanical transposition of the periodisation in history to the field of literature leads to simplification here too.

It is particularly important to understand correctly Lenin's periodisation as applied to the third, proletarian period in the Russian liberation movement. Attempts to restrict all that is progressive in the literature of the peoples of Russia to the name of Gorky, to narrow the range of progressive phenomena, have already led to dogmatic conceptions. Indeed Gorky and his literary contemporaries did express most fully in their art the progressive ideas of the period. But that is no justification for disregarding all the complexity and variety of literature in this period, and for schematically underestimating all that was outside the framework of socialist realism. Extremely dangerous, in particular are tendencies to belittle, directly or indirectly, the significance of critical realism. There is not, and cannot be, an iron wall between socialist realism and the rest of literature, there is and must be a multitude of close and adjoining phenomena, as usually happens in the history of new, progressive art.

Only by proceeding from the totality of Lenin's historical conception, standing on the firm ground of facts, can one decide correctly questions of periodisation in the historico-literary process.

The reactionary history of literature has ignored the role of the people in history. It has made the whole develop

ment of social thought and *belles lettres* dependent on narrow minded intellectual moods or various sorts of foreign philosophico-aesthetic influences Lenin sharply opposed such theories A particularly important work, asserting the idea of the popular roots of our best progressive writers' art is his article "Concerning *Vekhi*"

In 1909 a group of Cadet publicists put out the *Vekhi* collection This book, to use Lenin's words, was a "real sign of the times" and expressed in its entirety the attack of counter revolution on the ideological front During the period of reaction a whole crowd of "fashionable" writers had made their appearance in literature and they abused Marxism by every possible means, calumniated the revolution and extolled perversion and treachery The contents of the *Vekhi* combined cynical praise of apostasy in politics with the assertion of reactionary idealism in philosophy and decadence in literature

The contributors to the *Vekhi* attacked the traditions of progressive Russian social thought, Belinsky and other revolutionary democratic writers Using every means to deride the 1905 revolution, these authors slavishly expressed gratitude to the autocracy for safeguarding the bourgeoisie with its bayonets and prisons against the "popular fury"

Lenin's article "Concerning *Vekhi*" contained a deep going analysis of the basic traditions in the ideas and social thought of the Russian liberation movement and convincingly revealed the complete break of the bourgeois liberal intelligentsia with that movement Lenin assessed the *Vekhi* collection as an encyclopaedia of liberal apostasy embracing three main themes 1) the struggle against the ideas underlying the whole world outlook of Russian (and international) democracy, 2) repudiation of the liberation movement of recent years and mud throwing at it 3) open proclamation of its flunkey feelings (and correspondingly flunkey policy) towards the Octobrist bourgeoisie, the old authorities, and the whole of old Russia in general

Lenin's article exposing the apostasy of the *Vekhi* supporters is a remarkable document of the struggle for progressive ideas and traditions in publicistics and literature Lenin thoroughly revealed the illusiveness of the claims made by Cadet publicists concerning the alleged viability of their reactionary programme, he exposed the groundlessness of their attempts to declare that the ideas of the revolu

tion were deprived of any basis in the development of existing reality. He proved with irrefutable force of conviction the hostility of the *Vekhi* programme to the people's basic interests and intentions and asserted the historical meaning of revolutionary ideas as the fullest expression of the people's strivings.

Being directed against distortions and falsifications of the ideological legacy of the Russian revolutionary democrats, Lenin's article "Concerning *Vekhi*" stresses the link between progressive Russian literature and publicistic works on the one hand and the moods of the broad popular masses on the other.

The revolutionary literature of the 19th century represented by the names of Belinsky, Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov, Saltykov-Shchedrin, Nekrasov and Uspensky expressed the moods of the many millions of peasants and this determined its popular character, its immense social significance. Such is the conclusion suggested by Lenin's assessment of these writers' works.

In the struggle against the *Vekhi* Lenin developed the programme propositions on the popular character of progressive Russian publicistic works and literature which he later expressed in reference to art in a conversation with Clara Zetkin.

Disclosing the historical nature of social development in the 19th century, Lenin refuted the attempts made by bourgeois historians and publicists to present the entire social struggle in Russia in the last century as the "celebrated struggle between the feudal landowners and the liberals. Bourgeois historiography inflated the differences between the feudal landowners and the liberals; they declared the liberals to be selfless fighters against the serf system. In accordance with that conception the bourgeois history of literature produced the theory of the single heroic character of Russian literature. Proclaiming the liberals the basic progressive social force in the 19th century, bourgeois literary historians ignored or distorted the revolutionary trend in Russian literature. Lenin, on the other hand, showed that the principal social contradictions in Russia's historical development in the last century were along another line—between the oppressed peasants and the landowners.

"The celebrated struggle between the feudal landowners and the liberals," Lenin wrote, "which our liberal and

liberal Narodnik historians have praised and made so much of, was a struggle waged *within* the ruling classes a struggle waged for the most part *within the ranks of the landowner class* a struggle waged *exclusively* over the extent and the forms of the proposed *concessions* The liberals like the feudal landowners upheld the property rights and rule of the land owners, and indignantly denounced all revolutionary ideas about *abolishing* those property rights, about *completely overthrowing* that rule"¹

From all this follows a most important conclusion for the history of literature The old, bourgeois history of literature reduced the entire progressive content of classical Russian literature to squalid liberal ideas For the bourgeois literary historians, Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov were nothing but commoners The role of the people, the influence exercised by the moods of millions of working people on progressive literature and publicistic creations was disregarded The basic historical contradictions of the period were passed over in silence

Absurd are the statements ignoring the link of the theoretical seekings and views of the revolutionary democratic writers with West European progressive materialistic thought But neither do attempts to represent them as blind imitation of thinkers abroad correspond to reality Lenin did not leave stone upon stone of the views presenting the classics of Russian criticism as mere disciples of foreign writers After shattering the versions that the philosophical and aesthetic conceptions of Belinsky Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov were borrowed Lenin scientifically defined the real vital source of their work, their links with the Russian liberation movement

Some foreign authors still try hard to prove that all the major phenomena in our aesthetics are borrowed The American historian Hans Kohn² for instance, and the West German sociologist Peter Scheibert, not concealing their hostility towards the revolutionary democratic movement, try by all means to drive home the thought that everything which was of significance in the spiritual life of Russia was based on imitation of Western models, and moreover on

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works* Vol 17 p 122

² H Kohn *The Mind of Modern Russia* 1955, 2nd ed, 1957, *Basic History of Modern Russia*, New York 1957

superficial copying which simplified and distorted the theory of foreign thinkers. It is understandable that they see "distortion" in the liberation revolutionary ideas of progressive Russian materialistic philosophy and aesthetics. According to Kohn, Chernyshevsky resembles a superficial imitator of L. Feuerbach and A. Comte. While ascribing blind borrowing from foreign thinkers to Chernyshevsky and other Russians of the sixties, H. Kohn and P. Scheibert at the same time accuse them of rejecting the basic ideas and traditions of Western philosophy and aesthetics. The criticism of the reactionary aspects of Hegel's philosophy by revolutionary democratic authors is represented as the outcome of insufficient knowledge of Hegel's works. Chernyshevsky's pitiless criticism of idealism, his position as a revolutionary, is interpreted by P. Scheibert as the end of the "philosophical age" in Russia, the advent of the "theological element of Russian radicalism in a new covering" a new "recourse to faith in conspiratorial activity".¹ Such accusations levelled against the revolutionaries of the sixties of replacing freedom of thought by politics, vulgar materialism, blind fanatic faith, are not new by any means. There was a time when they were advanced by Yurkevich, the *Vekhi* writer Berdyaev, and other representatives of idealistic reaction.

Intensive efforts to prove the borrowing of all the major phenomena in our literature are also made by other foreign authors. D. Czizewski in his book *Contemporary History of the Slav Literatures* (New York, 1956) considers everything of significance in Russian literature as primitive transformation of the achievements of West European culture. All Russian literature, from *Daniel's Prayers in Prison* to *It* by V. Mayakovsky and *Songs on Corn* by S. Esenin is represented in this book as copied from definite West European models. The main source of this borrowing is seen in German philosophico-aesthetic and literary mysticism. According to the author of *Contemporary History of the Slav Literatures*, Belinsky is a disciple of the German idealists who simplified and rationalised their doctrines, the philosophy and aesthetics of Chernyshevsky are described as the ideas of L. Feuerbach "reduced to the absurd".

¹ P. Scheibert, *Von Bakunin zu Lenin. Geschichte der russischen revolutionären Ideologien 1840-1895*, Bd. 1, Leiden, 1956, XII, S. 344.

The all round elucidation by Lenin of the profound vital sources of Russian literature, the establishment of an inseverable link between the works of Belinsky, Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov and the revolutionary moods of the oppressed popular masses irrefutably reveal the groundlessness of theories of this sort which were formerly spread by the authors of the *Vekhi*

VISSARION BELINSKY

In the historical conditions at the turn of the century the problem of the legacy of the revolutionary democrats became particularly urgent and occupied a prominent place in the ideological struggle. Lenin's works on the revolutionary democrats were the answer to attempts made by reactionaries and liberals to cast aspersions on that legacy and use it against the ideas of socialism.

The argument over the legacy of the forties and sixties was settled by Lenin on the plane of the struggle for the best achievements of human culture to which the works of Herzen, Belinsky, Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov and Saltykov-Shchedrin belong beyond any doubt. Lenin shows that they were the principal political and historical figures in the Russian revolutionary movement of the pre-Marxian period. They advanced Russian revolutionary thought, preserved the revolutionary traditions, spread the ideas of socialism among the people.

Highly appraising the political and literary activity of the Russian revolutionary democratic writers, Lenin emphasised " *The role of vanguard fighter can be fulfilled only by a party that is guided by the most advanced theory*. To have a concrete understanding of what this means let the reader recall such predecessors of Russian Social Democracy as Herzen, Belinsky, Chernyshevsky, and the brilliant galaxy of revolutionaries of the seventies let him ponder over the world significance which Russian literature is now acquiring "1

* * *

In the light of Lenin's historico-literary conception, Vissarion Belinsky was one of the most brilliant thinkers and outstanding personalities of the revolutionary movement

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol 5, p. 370

in Russia in the 19th century Lenin gave an all round characterisation of the significance of the great critic's work and that of his followers who played an immense role in forming the ideas of several generations of Russian revolutionaries and educating the people in the spirit of love of freedom and devotion to their Motherland

Belinsky's many-sided talent combined the profound thinking and the temperament of the politician with remarkable perspicacity, his activity opened up a new period in the development of the liberation movement in Russia. Lenin defined precisely Belinsky's place in the history of the Russian revolution. Lenin's teaching on the stages in the history of the liberation movement in Russia clarifies Belinsky's paramount historical role as the founder of Russian revolutionary democratic thought and literary criticism. In characterising the three basic stages in the Russian liberation movement Lenin wrote that "it was V. G. Belinsky who even before the abolition of serfdom, was a forerunner of the *raznochintsy*, who were to completely oust the nobility from our emancipation movement".¹ Belinsky began his activity on the borderline between two historical stages when the Decembrists had been defeated and the generation of revolutionary commoners had not yet emerged. Having inherited the Decembrists' freedom-loving traditions, Belinsky in his perspicacity saw at the time the weak aspects of the revolution of the nobility, first and foremost its lack of broad support among the masses, its remoteness from the people.

In Belinsky's day there was not yet a revolutionary party in Russia. Belinsky's great historical merit was that he became the initiator, the "spiritual father" of the revolutionary-democratic movement in Russia. No theory of revolutionary struggle had yet been created in Russia, and Belinsky was the first Russian public figure to begin laying the foundations of such a theory. There were no possibilities whatever for open political struggle. Resolutely and persistently, despite the impediments and obstructions raised by the censorship, the great critic propagated by articles in journals the ideas of the people's revolutionary liberation.

Lenin associated the world historical significance of last century's Russian classical literature with the inspiring

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 20, pp. 245-46

influence exercised by the ideas of Belinsky and the revolutionary democrats of the sixties. Belinsky showed Russian writers the path by following which the literature of our country in the latter half of the 19th century became the most outstanding in the world, both by its artistic merits and its ideas.

In 1912 in his article "Yet Another Anti Democratic Campaign", Lenin noted the immense significance of Belinsky's works for the spiritual growth of the popular masses. Lenin wrote that the time of revolutionary upsurge, to the great grief of the landowner liberal counter revolution, saw the beginning of the fulfilment of Nekrasov's wish, who had dreamed of the time

*When people will not buy the books
Of Blucher or some silly lord,
But Gogol and Belinsky's works
From market stalls bring home*

For Belinsky literature was a mirror of life, he taught not only the correct understanding of the writer's work, he also taught the people to understand their destiny correctly. Belinsky revealed to the people their historical mission, imbued them with faith in their strength and inspired them to fight for a better future.

In Lenin's utterances on Belinsky we find the key for solving the most complex problems in the formation of the critic's world outlook. Belinsky was the embodiment of the searches in the realm of ideas by a whole generation of progressive members of Russian society. The striving to serve his people and to ease its harsh lot in every possible way, love for his country, these were the real sources of his rebellious seeking for a theory which could be a reliable compass for the people in their revolutionary struggle.

We see clearly from Lenin's works that Belinsky continued the political and philosophical traditions of Radishchev and the Decembrists. At that time he turned to West European philosophy in an endeavour to find in it the answer to the questions that were tormenting him. It is well known that advanced thought in Russia eagerly followed, as Lenin noted, every revolutionary word uttered in Europe or America and sought to sum up the experience of world history and culture to make it promote the liberation of the popular masses.

However, Lenin categorically rejected the erroneous and in many respects slanderous opinion that Belinsky was not an independent and profound thinker, but merely a talented disciple of West European scholars

Such a presentation of the evolution in Belinsky's ideas fails to take into account the main determining factor—the influence of reality itself, the specific conditions in Russia during the first half of the 19th century. It would be contrary to historic truth to deny the influence of progressive foreign thought. However, it was not a matter of mere copying, but a form of independent theoretical solution of questions connected with the destiny of the Russian people. Attempts to find outside Russia the point of departure and the theoretical basis of the development in Belinsky's ideas ignore the popular principle of the critic's world outlook.

Lenin's judgements as a whole on Belinsky clearly show that the initial principle in the development of his philosophical, sociological and literary views was first and foremost Russian reality in his day, the striving to provide an answer to the burning questions of the country's historical development, the desire to defend the people's interests. "The importance of questions of theory," Belinsky wrote, "depend on their relationship to reality. In ourselves, around ourselves, that is where we must seek both the questions and their solutions."¹ This is borne out by the range of questions which worried him. The dependence of Belinsky's socio-philosophical development on Russian life is most tangibly revealed by the fact that his work was subordinated to the struggle against the serf system and tsarism. And this was Russia's principal political problem at the time.

The striving to avoid idealist abstraction, the attraction towards materialism are already clearly discernible in Belinsky's early works. But his road to materialism proved to be intricate and agonising.

The passion with which Belinsky gave himself up to his spiritual seekings largely explains his theoretical achievements, but it was also sometimes the cause of temporary delusions. The period of his "resignation to reality" has often been and still is an object for argument. The reaction

¹ V. G. Belinsky *Collected Works* Vol. X, Moscow, 1956, p. 32 (in Russian).

aries, who tried by all possible means to denigrate the great revolutionary, gave currency to the still tenacious version which represents this period as one of continuous mistakes and failures for Belinsky. If we adopt a creative approach to Lenin's thought, we see clearly the historical truth and the real contradictions in which the great critic's revolutionary democratic outlook took shape. Similarly also Belinsky's biggest delusion—his temporary resignation to reality—cannot be explained only by his personal peculiarities, as many liberal bourgeois scholars have tried to do. It was they who gave rise to the tendency still current even in some works of the present time on Belinsky to see the origin of this mistake only in the influence exerted on him by the reactionary aspects of Hegel's philosophy—his formulation "Everything that is real is rational, everything that is rational is real." This view would have been concurred in even by the critic's avowed enemies, those inveterate reactionaries who took a spiteful pleasure in depicting this period as betrayal of the principles of democracy and liberty, as complete dependence of the Russian thinker on the conservative aspects of Hegel's philosophy.

By laying all possible stress on Belinsky's "failures" his enemies wished to find in them new arguments to corroborate their slanderous allegations of his complete dependence on foreign scientific authorities. That is why the reactionaries and liberals wrote so much and in such detail on the subject. Carefully collecting all self-critical acknowledgements by Belinsky, who was so severe and straightforward in condemning his own delusions, the tendentious historians passed over in silence the innermost meaning and vital significance of the critic's mistakes.

Lenin's characterisation of Belinsky as a representative of the revolutionary moods of the millions of peasants presents his seekings in a new light and reveals that Belinsky's mistake was due to his agonising attempts to find a basis for his theoretic strivings in the concrete reality of his time, to his desire to bring philosophy and literature closer to life.

Lenin's conception rejects the version put forward by bourgeois liberal critics that Belinsky was hysterical and unstable by nature and that he went from one extreme to another. We see the seekings of a great thinker and revolutionary keen on finding in reality, not in dreams and illusions, a basis on which to implement his ideals. Belinsky

repeatedly expressed the thought of the superiority of vital experience as compared with abstract idealistic theories. He came to understand that without knowledge of the concrete forces and laws of history philosophical thought is doomed to vegetate in the realm of speculative abstractions. Active by his nature, setting himself the main aim of patriotic activity for the good of humanity, and being vitally interested in the progress of Russia, Belinsky endeavoured to break out of the abstraction of idealistic philosophy into concrete reality and find means of changing that reality. In December 1840 he wrote to V. P. Botkin: "I am giving up abstract generality. I want to speak about life on the basis of the fact in question."¹ But in Russia during the reactionary reign of Nicholas I it was not so easy to find the real historical forces of progress and to define on their basis the laws of society's transformation. Hence the delusion and disappointment of Belinsky, whose trend of thought was in itself revolutionary. He had literally to fight his way to the straight and broad road of revolutionary action through the ruins of incorrect philosophical concepts which sometimes led him into a blind alley.

Attempts to exaggerate Belinsky's delusions during the period of "resignation to reality" are unjustified. In order to arrive at the truth it is essential to define the purposefulness of the critic's spiritual development. The reactionaries and liberals endeavoured to avoid all mention of this, since the inner meaning of Belinsky's ideal striving was to transform abstract philosophical propositions into a theory of effective social action, to bring thinking closer to the practice of social transformation. In characterising all the stages of Belinsky's work the researcher has no right to disregard the main perspective of the courageous Russian thinker's philosophical and political development. What is of primary importance for us is the truly heroic way in which he overcame his own mistake. Our researchers into Belinsky's work have not yet devoted due attention to this aspect of the question. Belinsky's strength lay precisely not in acceptance but in his deep-going rejection of Hegel's theory of society's predetermined development.

Lenin's elucidation of the development of the liberation movement in Russia confirms that the cause of Belins-

¹ V. G. Belinsky *Collected Works* Vol. XI, p. 581

ky's delusions and mistakes lay in the social situation in the country during the forties of the 19th century Belinsky was unable to discover immediately the genuine forces of the Russian revolution. He saw the peasants' lack of organisation and their downtrodden condition. During the reactionary reign of Nicholas I he felt himself all alone among liberal intellectuals of noble and bourgeois extraction.

From the early forties till the end of his life Belinsky's philosophical and political development was distinguished by increasingly resolute assertion of materialistic and socialist ideas. The peak of this persistent ascent in the realm of ideas was reached with his famous letter to Gogol and his review of Russian literature of the year 1847.

Belinsky's passionate seekings led him to the highest result possible in his time in Russia. Rising step by step in philosophical and social thought, he came to the revolutionary democratism. It required all the brilliance of a Belinsky to rise in the backward autocratic Russia of the forties to advanced materialist thought and revolutionary democratism.

To Belinsky we can apply what Lenin said about revolutionary theory being truly won by Russia "through the *agony* she experienced in the course of half a century of unparalleled torment and sacrifice, of unparalleled revolutionary heroism, incredible energy, devoted searching study, practical trial, disappointment, verification, and comparison with European experience."¹

Lenin appraised highly the solid Russian materialistic traditions of which Belinsky was the founder. We Soviet people can well understand his uncompromising attitude towards all forms of idealism. It was based on a clear understanding of the fact that the idealist world outlook is associated with reaction, with a strengthening of religion, the autocracy and feudal ownership. Here Belinsky came close to the notion of the partisanship of philosophy, to the comprehension of the class basis of theoretical doctrines. And when in our day bourgeois and pseudo-socialist scientists, sociologists and philosophers resurrect the most reactionary doctrines of the past, we see more

¹ V I Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, pp. 25-26.

clearly the actuality and broad theoretical significance of Belinsky's works

It is established in Lenin's works that the specifics of Belinsky's theoretical thought are to be accounted for first of all by the fact that it arose not on the soil of bourgeois social activity like West European philosophy of the same period, but on the basis of the people's liberation movement. The members of the Russian liberation movement in the 19th century were inspired by the programme of a peasants' revolution. All the political problems on the order of the day were solved in that programme more consistently and resolutely than in the theories of the bourgeois revolutions in the West European countries, which voiced the interests of a relatively narrow section of the population. In his works of 1846-1848 Belinsky laid down the general principles of the programme for a peasant revolution which was subsequently elaborated precisely and consistently by Chernyshevsky.

* * *

The authors of the *Vekhi* wanted to prove that Belinsky and his followers did not express the thoughts and yearnings of the popular masses, but only represented moods of the intellectuals. Lenin defended progressive Russian publicistic writings, philosophy, and literature and proved their inseparable connection with the revolutionary minded popular masses.

The Letter to N. V. Gogol is one of the most brilliant and complete expressions of Belinsky's revolutionary and literary criticism programme. Lenin wrote that this letter summed up Belinsky's revolutionary and literary activity and was one of the best works of the illegal press in Russia; it retained its vital significance for many decades of struggle against tsarism and the serf system. In his "Letter to N. V. Gogol" Belinsky proved with the passion of a great people's champion the necessity for abolishing the serf system and pointed out that the fulfilment of this task was one of the most vital questions for Russia.

Lenin described the "Letter to N. V. Gogol" as a manifesto of the revolutionary minded serf peasantry and all progressive elements in Russian society in the forties of the past century. In opposition to all kinds of openly reactionary and liberal inventions, Lenin in his article "Concerning

Vekhu" indicated the real sources of the passionate revolutionary protest which sounds throughout the whole of the great critic's publicistic work. In reply to attempts made by renegade authors to cast aspersions on the legacy of the revolutionary Russian democrats, Lenin wrote: "Belinsky's letter to Gogol, declares *Vekhu*, is a lurid and classical expression of intellectualist sentiment" (56).

Well, well! The serf peasants' hostility to serfdom is obviously an 'intellectualist sentiment'. Or, perhaps, in the opinion of our wise and educated authors, Belinsky's sentiments in the letter to Gogol did not depend on the feelings of the serf peasants? The history of our publicist literature did not depend on the indignation of the popular masses against the survivals of feudal oppression? ¹ Strong by virtue of its revolutionary conviction, its indomitable and wrathful hatred of tsarism and the serf system, this letter is still now capable of delighting and exciting the reader.

In the forties of the last century there had not yet been a demarcation of the liberal and socialist trends. Belinsky laid the basis for that demarcation. In the light of Lenin's conception the striving to reduce the ideas contained in the Russian literature of Belinsky's time to the conflict between the Westerners, on the one hand, and the "conservatives" and Slavophiles on the other, cannot stand up to scientific criticism. This striving does not accord with the truth since it disregards as an historical force the people, the millions of oppressed peasants in whose name Belinsky wrote.

Belinsky was a representative not of the Left Westerners, but of an entirely new stream in the Russian social movement, a new period in it. The social behaviour and manner of thinking of the Left Westerners. Belinsky's temporary allies and friends were characterised with precision by Chernyshevsky: "They were good so long as Belinsky held them firmly in check, and clever so long as he filled their heads with his own ideas. Now they have gone flat."

The Westerners criticised tsarist Russia's technical and cultural backwardness and the harshness of serfdom. But they wanted the country to continue developing within the framework of the existing social relationships. The imme-

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works* Vol. 16 p. 125.

diate aim of Belinsky's liberation struggle, on the other hand, was the abolition of the autocracy and serfdom, the country's democratic transformation

'It must not be forgotten,' Lenin wrote, "that at the time when the eighteenth century enlighteners (who are by general consent included among the leaders of the bourgeoisie) wrote, and at the time when our enlighteners of the forties and sixties wrote, *all* social problems amounted to the struggle against serfdom and its survivals. At that time the new socio economic relations and their contradictions were still in embryo"¹

Belinsky brilliantly discerned the contradictions of capitalism in the backward Russia of the serf system, and criticised the principles of bourgeois society. While accepting the definite progressive aspects of capitalism, the critic at the same time foretold that the domination of the bourgeoisie and capital would be the last evil in the life of humanity

ALEXANDER HERZEN

After the Decembrists Herzen was the most prominent figure in the nobility period of the liberation movement. To him Lenin dedicated his article "In Memory of Herzen", written in 1912 on the occasion of the centenary of Herzen's birth

Lenin defined Herzen's place in the history of the Russian liberation movement and the history of the 19th century in connection with the polemic on the history of Russian revolutionary journalism, to counteract the Cadet and Menshevik distortions. The bourgeois press, while honouring Herzen, distorted his figure as a fighter and writer and made all possible efforts to utilise his legacy in the struggle against the ideas of the approaching socialist revolution. In particular P. Struve gave the name of *Polyarnaya Zvezda* to Menshevik journal for publicity purposes and claimed to continue Herzen's traditions. In order to make its positions more popular the liberal and Menshevik press exaggerated Herzen's weak aspects and passed over his strong ones in silence, saying nothing of how he, being a revolu

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, pp. 505-06

tionary, differed from the supporters of the autocracy and asserting that at the end of his life he renounced the revolution. All this calumny was combined with the most pompous jubilee "philistine eulogies." Lenin's article "In Memory of Herzen" and other utterances were spearheaded against the distortions of Herzen's revolutionary traditions. Imbued from the first to the last line with political emotion, Lenin's articles restore the true figure of Herzen as a writer. Lenin establishes Herzen's role in the Russian liberation movement in accordance with his general historical and literary conception. The main task of progressive literature and social thought at this period was to stir up the revolutionary energy of the masses and arouse their political activity. Lenin saw the merits of the best representatives of the nobility in the fact that, working in the conditions of the oppressed and inert Russia with its serf system they helped to rouse the people. In his article "From the History of the Workers' Press in Russia" (1914) he states "Just as the Decembrists roused Herzen, so Herzen and his *Kolokol* helped to rouse the *raznochintsy*."¹ Lenin had a high opinion of Herzen because, breaking the servile silence, he succeeded in developing revolutionary agitation.

Herzen's world outlook was limited by the epoch in which he lived and Lenin was of the opinion that the inconsistencies in it reflected the social contradictions in Russia and Western Europe. He found the explanation for the strong and weak sides of Herzen's outlook in the historical situation. It was this which led to Herzen's spiritual crisis.

After leaving Russia, Herzen was an eyewitness of the revolution of 1848. He was already then a democrat, a revolutionary and a socialist. But his "socialism" was one of the forms and varieties of bourgeois and petty bourgeois socialism of which there were so many at that time and to which the June events finally put an end. In essence it was not socialism at all, but a high sounding phrase, a benevolent dream used to clothe their revolutionary spirit by the bourgeois democrats and the proletariat still under their influence.

Lenin contrasted Herzen's scepticism to that of the amateurs of liberal empty talk in Russia who disguised their counter-revolutionary spirit with colourful phrases about

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works* Vol. 20 p. 245.

Herzen's disappointment, who betrayed the Russian revolution of 1905, and whose scepticism was an intermediary form between democracy and servile liberalism

The liberal press saw the cause and meaning of Herzen's spiritual drama in the morbid disappointment caused by lost revolutionary beliefs. Lenin, on the contrary, discerned in that drama the collapse of former utopian illusions, a reflection of the historical period when the revolutionary spirit of bourgeois democracy in Europe was already dying and that of the socialist proletariat had not yet matured

In disclosing the vital basis of Herzen's work Lenin achieves classical fulness in defining the specific complexity of the shaping of his world outlook. In particular, in a number of books and articles Herzen is described as a revolutionary democrat as early as the forties. Lenin's works arm us against simplifying and straightening out the writer's creative path. It follows from Lenin's writings that Herzen's development, for all his vacillations towards liberalism, was directed towards revolutionary democratism. But in the forties and fifties Herzen's activity was still that of a revolutionary nobleman.

Only when Herzen perceived in the people the basic force of history did he become a revolutionary democrat. "It was not Herzen's fault but his misfortune that he could not see the revolutionary people in Russia itself in the 1840s. When *in the sixties* he came to see the revolutionary people, he sided fearlessly with the revolutionary democracy against liberalism."¹ Precisely the fact that Herzen's world outlook was in the process of formation accounts for the number of divergences between him, on the one side, and Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov, on the other, and the historical intricacy of their relations, sometimes unjustifiably passed over in silence by literary historians.

The weak sides of Herzen's world outlook did not escape Lenin's attention: his Narodist utopia of a special kind of "Russian socialism", his liberal propensities, which drew severe censure from the revolutionary democrats. Lenin noted liberal tendencies in *Kolokol* (Sugary letters in *Kolokol* to Alexander II the Hangman, which today one cannot read without revulsion). But Lenin's main attention was centred on Herzen's revolutionary feat, on his raising the

¹ Ibid., Vol. 18, p. 30.

banner of struggle for the people's victory over tsarism by addressing free Russian words to the masses

To prove his point of view Lenin quoted, alongside other extensive materials, Herzen's "Letters to an Old Comrade", which were published in 1870, after their author's death. For a long time these letters were an object of heated arguments. On the basis of certain quotations from them the reactionary press tried to weave a legend about Herzen's alleged repudiation of revolutionary ideas in the last years of his life. It was this critical and contradictory material that Lenin used to cast light on the historical meaning of Herzen's spiritual seekings. With Herzen, scepticism was a form of the transition from a bourgeois democracy that is "above classes" to the stern class struggle of the proletariat.

Lenin, demonstrating the positive historical content of Herzen's work, saw his immense merit in the fact that he created a free Russian press abroad. *Polyarnaya Zvezda* raised up the revolutionary traditions of the Decembrists, *Kolokol* stood firm as a rock for the emancipation of the peasants.

The revolutionary democrats of the sixties—Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov, Serno-Solovievich—were right when they reproached Herzen for retreating from democratism to liberalism. However, "much as he vacillated between democracy and liberalism, the democrat in him gained the upper hand." At the end of his life Herzen broke with the anarchist Bakunin and "turned his gaze, not to liberalism, but to the *International*—to the International led by Marx, to the International which had begun to *rally the legions* of the proletariat, to unite *the world of labour*." ¹

In his study of Herzen Lenin displayed a different approach from Plekhanov. The latter discerned the cause of Herzen's spiritual drama in the fact that, though he was aware of the inconsistency of historical idealism, he was nevertheless incapable of becoming a historical materialist. Plekhanov proceeded in this from the theoretical contradiction only. Lenin sought and found the origin of the contradictoriness of Herzen's world outlook in the concrete reality. That is why Plekhanov confined himself in his works merely to stating the strong and weak sides of Herzen's views. Lenin,

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 18, p. 27

on the other hand, demonstrated all the aspects in Herzen's specific world outlook and activity, he linked Herzen with the entire tradition of Russian revolutionary thought. In difficult times for the revolutionary movement Lenin noted that from the example of Herzen the working class could apprehend the grandiose significance of revolutionary theory, learn to understand that selfless devotion to the revolution and profession of the revolution to the people are not vain, even if tens of years separate the sowing from the harvest.

NIKOLAI CHERNYSHEVSKY

V I Lenin displayed the greatest love and respect for the memory of Chernyshevsky. In his works he characterised in a new way and from all aspects the historical significance and content of Chernyshevsky's activity. With Chernyshevsky is associated the radical demarcation of the class forces and trends in social thought in last century Russia. He led the brilliant cohort of revolutionary *raznochintsi* of the sixties. Lenin pointed out that in the national culture of old Russia there were really two national cultures: the one of the landowners and bourgeoisie, the other of the people.

Lenin linked Chernyshevsky's activity with the maturing of the revolutionary situation in Russia during the fifties and sixties. The Crimean War tangibly exposed the rottenness and impotence of the feudal monarchy, which was keeping the country in backwardness and darkness. The reform of 1861 was incapable of improving the peasants' condition. Revolutionary thoughts of doing away with the property rights of the landowners and completely overthrowing tsarism were penetrating more and more among the masses. There was maturing a real possibility of a revolutionary explosion, a gigantic uprising of the peasantry against serfdom and tsarism.

The latter half of the fifties was a time when a tense situation was taking shape in the country and the edifice of the monarchy was showing cracks. "The most cautious and sober politician could not but acknowledge the possibility of a revolutionary outbreak and the serious danger of a peasant revolt."¹ In corroboration of his propositions on the

¹ V I Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, p. 39

revolutionary agitation in the years 1861-1863, Lenin cites numerous historical documents and materials, and in particular refers to interesting facts contained in an article by L. Panteleyev, "Reminiscences of the Sixties", which was published in the well known collection *At the Glorious Post*

The key proposition around which the struggle between the revolutionary democratic and the liberal monarchist camp centred was the peasant question. Lenin was the first to define in a Marxist manner Chernyshevsky's progressive stand and his role in the political life of that time. Chernyshevsky was one of the few during that period who understood and exposed the feudal character of the reform carried out by the autocracy. He described that reform as an abomination and branded its anti-popular essence. Lenin said that it required precisely Chernyshevsky's brilliance to discern the bourgeois character of the reform at the time of its being carried out. Already in his articles "Criticism of the Philosophical Prejudices Against Community Ownership of Land" (1858), "Organisation of the Life of Landowners' Peasants", "Is It Difficult to Redeem Land?" (1859), "Materials for Solving the Peasant Question" (1859) and others, Chernyshevsky, with the support of numerous facts, pitilessly unmasked the government's policy in preparing the plunder of the peasants, and also the deceit of the liberals who acted as lackeys of the feudal landowners.

In his economical, historical, philosophical and literary works Chernyshevsky dealt with the most basic problems of his time and solved them in the spirit of consistent revolutionary democracy. He was a far more consistent and militant democrat than Herzen. His works, Lenin said, "breathe the spirit of the class struggle". In Chernyshevsky's time, Lenin stresses, democracy and socialism merged in a single whole: they were at first blended together in the utopian ideology of the revolutionary Narodniks. "A democrat of that epoch when democracy and socialism were undivided"¹ is how Lenin describes Chernyshevsky in his work *What the "Friends of the People" Are*. Lenin appreciated Chernyshevsky's genuine democracy, for he found a kinship between it and the attitude of Marxism towards the masses. Using the words of Kautsky, Lenin defined with precision the

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works* Vol. 1, p. 280

general spirit of Chernyshevsky's time then "every socialist was a poet, and every poet a socialist" ¹ This accounts for the exceptional significance of Chernyshevsky's literary criticism, which supplied the answers to the basic questions

In the forties of the last century the demarcation between the liberal and socialist trends had not yet taken place in Russia. Chernyshevsky carried out that demarcation in literature and in social life. Lenin repeatedly admired truly amazing political perspicacity of Chernyshevsky, who was one of the first to reveal the essence of liberalism.

History confirmed his assessments of liberalism, which claimed a foremost place in society. Chernyshevsky's consistent fight against this trend proved to be of extreme actuality, for it had vital significance also in the following periods of the country's historical development. Chernyshevsky and the liberals of the sixties were the exponents of two historical trends in Russia, of two historical forces which determined the course of the struggle for a new Russia right up to the victory of the socialist revolution: the socialist, revolutionary trend, and the bourgeois liberal trend. In this connection, in his article "The Peasant Reform and the Proletarian Peasant Revolution" Lenin expressed a thought which is very important for literary historians, namely that the tendencies outlined in life and in literature in 1861 developed, grew and in 1905 separated and drew the bounds between each other. The historical tendency which the liberals represented finally merged with the forces of counter-revolution. The other tendency, represented by Chernyshevsky, promoted the development of democratic and socialist forces which subsequently won a complete victory in the Great October Socialist Revolution.

Chernyshevsky was a utopian socialist: he dreamed of transition to socialism through the patriarchal Russian village *obshchina*. In the conditions of backward Russia he did not and could not see that the creation of new, capitalist relations would create the material conditions and the social forces for the implementation of socialism. But Chernyshevsky envisaged this transition being accomplished only in a revolutionary way. For that reason he stood incommensurably higher than the other representatives of utopian socialism. Lenin pointed out the particular

¹ Ibid., p. 263

feature of Chernyshevsky's world outlook " Chernyshevsky was not only a utopian socialist he was also a revolutionary democrat, he approached all the political events of his time in a revolutionary spirit and was able to exercise a revolutionary influence by advocating, in spite of all the barriers and obstacles placed in his way by the censorship, the idea of a peasant revolution, the idea of the struggle of the masses for the overthrow of all the old authorities "1

In his article "The Heritage We Renounce", Lenin noted that the view on the *obshchina* upheld by Chernyshevsky and his fellow thinkers was not to be confused with those held by the Narodniks "Any doctrine that teaches that Russia is exceptional is completely at variance with the spirit and the tradition of the sixties Even more at variance with this tradition is Narodism's idealisation and over-embellishment of the countryside This false idealisation, which desired at all costs to see something specific in our rural system, something quite unlike the rural system in every other country in the period of pre-capitalist relations, is in naked contradiction to the traditions of the sober and realistic heritage "2

Unlike the Slavophiles and the Narodniks, Chernyshevsky understood perfectly well that Russia had ahead a road of further development and that the *obshchina* would have to be superseded by a higher form of socio-economic life

Chernyshevsky regarded the *obshchina* as the basis for transition to a new, incomparably higher system to socialism In his view the communal system would be convenient with the introduction of "very powerful machines for ploughing the land", for "the use of machines requiring farms of vast dimensions, covering hundreds of *dessiatines*" 3 (The success of machinery and technology proves beyond doubt that such a time will come 4) The building of socialism in Russia was implemented not through the patriarchal *obshchina*, but by other means But Chernyshevsky's dreams of a new, large-scale agriculture equipped with machinery very much resembled what we have

1 V I Lenin *Collected Works* Vol 17 p 123

2 Ibid, Vol 2 p 518

3 N G Chernyshevsky *Collected Works* Vol 4 p 345 (in Russian)

4 Ibid, pp 345-46

According to Lenin's description, Chernyshevsky was "a remarkably profound critic of capitalism despite his utopian socialism"¹ Chernyshevsky's perspicacity was displayed by the fact that he not only proved that the autocratic and feudal landowner system was foredoomed but also discerned, in the conditions of economically backward Russia, that capitalism was hostile to the interests of the working people, that the bourgeois "freedoms" were illusory To this very day there is a ring of actuality in what Chernyshevsky said about the bourgeois "democrats" "I don't like these gentlemen who speak of freedom, freedom and confine freedom to pronouncing the word and writing it into the laws but do not introduce it into life, to abolishing laws which speak of inequality but not abolish the social order under which nine-tenths of the people are slaves and proletarians, what matters is not whether there will be a tsar or not, whether there will be a constitution or not, but the social relations, that one class does not suck the blood of another"²

Understanding the progressive aspect of capitalism, Chernyshevsky at the same time foretold that the domination of the bourgeoisie and capital would be the last evil in the life of humanity He has the merit of having elucidated for Russian society the truth that the replacement of absolutism not only by a constitutional monarchy, but even by a bourgeois republic, would not bring freedom and happiness to the working people.

Chernyshevsky pointed out the internal antagonism of capitalist relations, illustrating it by the example of the advanced bourgeois countries He utterly refuted the works of the Russian liberal economists Vernadsky, Gorelov and others, who based themselves on foreign authorities He convincingly proved the reactionary character of such foreign economists as Malthus, the inconsistency and dualism of the works of J S Mill, who, though a great scientist, ended up by justifying capitalism He wrote extensive notes to J S Mill's *Principles of Political Economy* which earned a high appraisal from Karl Marx In his polemics with bourgeois economists Chernyshevsky proved the histor-

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works* Vol 20 p 246

² N G Chernyshevsky, *Collected Works*, Vol 1, Moscow, 1939, p 110 (in Russian)

ical inevitability of the downfall of capitalism and the emergence of a new, democratic system

In his article "On the Significance of Militant Materialism" Lenin, noting the existence of a solid materialist tradition in Russia, named Chernyshevsky first among its founders. Lenin made frequent use of Chernyshevsky's consistent materialist tradition as a weapon against the various forms of idealism. Chernyshevsky was beyond doubt the biggest consistent and prominent materialist philosopher in the pre-Marxian period. He was the only really great Russian writer who, from the fifties of the last century till the end of his life, remained faithful to undiluted philosophical materialism.

He persistently developed the ideas of materialism. During the period when idealism was dominant he wrote a number of outstanding materialistic works which earned a permanent place in the history of Russian philosophy. Of particular significance were his works "The Aesthetic Relation of Art to Reality", "The Anthropological Principle in Philosophy", "Polemical Gems", "Preface to and Comments on Carpenter's *Energy in Nature*".

Chernyshevsky militantly defended the ideas of materialism in all fields of science and art. His classical works became world known, promoted Russian society's moral armament with revolutionary ideas and played an active role in rousing it to fight for the people's rights. All his works on literature, economics, history, and the political events of his time are permeated with the passionate call to revolution.

Chernyshevsky did not acknowledge any "pure science", "pure philosophy", or "pure art" existing above the classes. The key to understanding of his positions on this question is provided by his words, still of actuality today: "how repulsive it is to me when somebody insists that he is resolutely impartial, does not belong to any party, how, indeed, can one not belong to any party, to any school?"¹

Chernyshevsky achieved understanding of the class essence of theoretical teachings. He was the first in the history of pre-Marxian philosophy in Russia and abroad to advance the proposition on philosophy's dependence on

¹ N. G. Chernyshevsky, *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 254 (in Russian).

politics. He showed that philosophical systems are tied to the interests of definite classes, the struggle of the parties. Of particular significance was his merit in defining the reactionary essence of subjective idealist philosophy and his uncompromising polemic with the neo-Kantians of his time, who tried to resurrect Kant's agnosticism. The struggle against neo-Kantianism, positivism and many other varieties of subjective idealism played an enormous role in the development of progressive Russian science. Chernyshevsky exposed the reactionary content of "transcendental" philosophy. In assessing Kant's agnosticism and subjectivism he came quite close to dialectical materialism. "Chernyshevsky," Lenin wrote, "is below Engels insofar as in his terminology he confuses the opposition between materialism and idealism with the opposition between metaphysical thought and dialectical thought, but Chernyshevsky is entirely on Engels' level insofar as he takes Kant to task not for realism, but for agnosticism and subjectivism, not for recognition of the 'thing in itself', but for inability to derive our knowledge from this objective source."¹ Lenin noted that Chernyshevsky did not succeed, or, to be more exact, was unable, by virtue of the backwardness of Russian life, to rise to dialectical materialism.

Chernyshevsky's materialistic teaching was the object of furious attacks and distortions on the part of the autocratic feudal landowner and liberal supporters of idealism. They tried to prove that Chernyshevsky's materialism was already obsolete and void of scientific value. Lenin exposed the real meaning and the groundlessness of the vain attempts made by reactionary pigmies to belittle the philosophical legacy of the great materialist. He pointed out the strong and the weak points of Chernyshevsky's philosophical works, the greatness of their scientific content and their significance for future generations.

Lenin's consistently materialist understanding of the beautiful in art is close in spirit to Chernyshevsky's aesthetics. The materialistic definition "the beautiful is life", theoretically expounds the realistic idea of the content of art. Chernyshevsky's conclusion that the object of art is life in all it embraces, and not only the beautiful and

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works*, Vol 14 p 360

its manifestations, opened up to literature the broadest prospects for developing and deepening realism

The remarkable and poetically expressed thought "the beautiful is life" preserves its vital meaning to this very day

The kinship between the general materialistic and aesthetic views of Lenin and Chernyshevsky determined the closeness between the way they understood the work of a number of writers. One cannot help noticing the striking resemblance between Lenin's and Chernyshevsky's judgements in characterising a feature in the work of Lev Tolstoi: his links with the consciousness of the peasant masses, his ability to convey their deep-down sentiments. Of particular interest in this respect is the article written by Chernyshevsky in connection with the publication of separate editions of Tolstoi's works *Childhood, Boyhood, War Stories* and his analysis of "A Landowner's Morning". "The only thing that is clear to us now is that Count Tolstoi reproduces with remarkable mastery not only the outward aspect of the villagers' life, but what is far more important their views of things. He is capable of transposing himself into the villager's soul: his *muzhik* is extraordinarily true to nature: in the speeches of his *muzhik* there is no embellishment, no rhetoric, peasant notions are conveyed by Count Tolstoi with as much truthfulness and higher relief as the characters of our soldiers."¹ Chernyshevsky revealed in a masterly fashion the most important tendencies in the works of the young Tolstoi which later became the basic features of his work and world outlook. Chernyshevsky's thought about the writer's ability to reproduce the "notions" of the Russian peasants is suggestive of Lenin's view of Tolstoi as expressing the strong and the weak aspects of the peasant movement.

For Chernyshevsky the highest stage of artistic creation was realism combining truthfulness in depicting noble passion with progressive thought. His famous saying that the supreme mission of art is not only to reflect life but also to pass judgement on the phenomena of reality became the classical basis of advanced Russian aesthetics. The thought of the effective social role in art of the judgement passed by thought on the phenomena of reality, subsequently

¹ N. G. Chernyshevsky, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, p. 682 (in Russian)

received its further and highest development in the principle of partisanship of literature put forward by Lenin. In developing and scientifically grounding the traditions of the revolutionary democrats, Lenin emphasised the inestimable significance of art, whose mission is to elevate the souls of the masses

Chernyshevsky was not only a great scientist and man of learning and a great publicist, he was also a great artist. When Lenin called him a 'great writer' he undoubtedly had in mind also his works in *belles lettres*. Not without reason did he so love and highly assess the novels *What Is To Be Done?* and *Prologue*. These works left an indelible mark in the consciousness of the progressive Russian public and exerted an immense influence on Russian literature. The powerful influence of Chernyshevsky's fiction is convincingly shown by the enthusiastic opinions of several Russian generations.

Close to V. I. Lenin by their spiritual make-up were the heroes of Chernyshevsky's writings. In Rakhmetov and Volgin, figures in the people's revolution were for the first time the principal and central heroes of literary works.

By the fifties, the process of degeneration of the 'redundant man', who had previously embodied the principle of progress and protest, became clearly evident.

Chernyshevsky's discrediting of the "redundant man", the hero of Turgenev's story *Asya*, the negation in his person of the reflective nobleman constitutes one of the brilliant chapters in the history of the class struggle in literature. The problem of the "redundant man" in the sixties was not an abstract literary argument, but a kind of refraction in literature of vital political questions of profound actuality. Chernyshevsky's attitude to "redundant people" was determined by the whole of his position as an ideologist of the people's revolution. Practical talk about the "redundant man" always centred on the attitude to liberalism.

Chernyshevsky's article "A Russian at a *Rendez-vous*" is a remarkable document exposing the political cowardice, the lack of will and the treachery of the nobility's liberalism. Analysing as an example the hero's character in the story *Asya*, Chernyshevsky brilliantly generalised the social and psychological essence of the liberal.

Lenin shared Chernyshevsky's critical attitude towards the liberal minded redundant people. In his article "When You Hear the Judgement of a Fool" he ridiculed the liberal irresolute hero who is incapable of real struggle. "The tragedy of the Russian radical," he wrote, 'is that for decades he has been yearning for meetings, for liberty, burning with passion (in words) for liberty, and when he goes to a meeting and finds that its temper is more radical than his own, he begins to sigh it is hard to judge, not more than one-tenth, one must be a bit more cautious, gentlemen!' He is just like Turgenev's ardent hero who ran away from Asya and about whom Chernyshevsky wrote 'A Russian at a Rendez vous' ¹

The assertion of the new hero was a most important beginning in the formation of the literature of revolutionary democracy. The new positive heroes of literature were first and foremost people of revolutionary action. Their words and acts were inseparable from each other.

The images of Rakhmetov and Volgin gave the answer to the question "What is to be done?" and provided an example for young people taking the path of revolutionary struggle. The "new people" were counterposed by Chernyshevsky to the "superfluous people" who had no aim in life. As opposed to the two-mindedness and moral decline of the "superfluous people", Rakhmetov and Volgin are firm and unshakeable in revolutionary struggle. They are integral and strong characters, dedicated to the idea of the people's emancipation. They are the forerunners of the purposeful conscious revolutionary heroes of Soviet literature.

Lenin's views on the specific features in the development of revolutionary publicistic and artistic writing in tsarist Russia make it possible for us to interpret correctly the specific style of Chernyshevsky's censored works.

The elucidation of some of Chernyshevsky's stylistic devices is considerably aided by Lenin having pointed out that Chernyshevsky was a great master of revolutionary propaganda under censorship, expounding "in spite of all the barriers and obstacles placed in his way by the censorship, the idea of a peasant revolution, the idea of the struggle of the masses for the overthrow of all the old authorities" ²

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 11, p. 462

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 17, p. 123

In his article "Persecutors of Zemstvo and Hannibals of Liberalism", Lenin especially noted the force of the mighty preaching of Chernyshevsky, who "was able, by means even of censored articles, to educate genuine revolutionaries"¹

Lenin pointed out that the majority of revolutionaries were obliged to resort to the "Aesopian language" in their desire to address themselves to readers at large in the legal press under the conditions prevailing in tsarist Russia. And Lenin himself was obliged to resort to that language. In his preface to *Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, he noted "This pamphlet was written with an eye to the tsarist censorship. Hence, I was not only forced to confine myself strictly to an exclusively theoretical, specifically economic analysis of facts, but to formulate the few necessary observations on politics with extreme caution, by hints, in an allegorical language in that accursed Aesopian language to which tsarism compelled all revolutionaries to have recourse whenever they took up the pen to write a legal work".²

Lenin's remarks concerning the specifics of Chernyshevsky's censored writings apply in full to his novel *What Is To Be Done?* and some others of his literary works. The characteristic feature of these works, and above all of *What Is To Be Done?* is that the subject is treated on two planes. The first plane, which is immediately obvious, embodies the family and everyday life theme. The second, which as a rule is somewhat disguised, develops the idea of the democratic revolution. Of course, these two aspects intertwine. The problems of the family and everyday life are treated from revolutionary positions. But the main political idea of the novel generally develops along the thematic lines of the second aspect. We must not forget that Chernyshevsky's literary writings, and especially *What Is To Be Done?*, provided Russian youth up to the beginning of the present century with almost the only source of socialist propaganda put across in a literary form in spite of the obstacles placed in its way by the tsarist censorship.

Emphasising the unity and consistency of Chernyshevsky's propaganda of revolutionary ideas in all his works, Lenin characterises his *Prologue* as an illegal work unlike his

¹ V. I. Lenin *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, p. 39

² *Ibid.* Vol. 22, p. 187

censored writings In his book *What the Friends of the People Are* Lenin notes Chernyshevsky's "ability to expound such purely revolutionary ideas in the censored press He wrote the same thing in his illegal works, but without circumlocution"¹

One cannot agree entirely with G V Plekhanov's assessment of the novel *Prologue* In his opinion this work is something like reminiscences in the form of a novel² There is no doubt that the novel contains considerable autobiographical material, but its content is much broader and must not be narrowed down to the biographical genre

Lenin characterised *Prologue* with great penetration as a work in which high artistic qualities merge with scientific truthfulness *Prologue* is work of great artistic and ideological generalisation, recording a brilliant period in the development of Russian society The truthfulness with which the events of the year 1861 are depicted combines in it with a depth of historical analysis until then unrivalled

The novel *Prologue* was the object of close attention on the part of V I Lenin As early as 1894 he noted in *What the Friends of the People' Are* how excellently and profoundly Chernyshevsky understood the antagonism of the Russian social classes, backing this with Volgin's words about the peasant reform Lenin refers to this novel also in a number of other works and quotes from it Enormous material helping us to understand and assess the content of this novel is also provided by Lenin's articles 'Draft for a Speech on the Agrarian Question in the Second State Duma' (1907), "What To Fight For" (1910), "The Peasant Reform and the Proletarian Peasant Revolution" (1911), "On the National Pride of the Great Russians" (1914), and others

Lenin repeatedly said that *Prologue* brushed a brilliant picture of the preparation for the "Peasant Reform of 1861", and of the trend of struggle and thought in Russian society at the time In depicting bright episodes in the political life of that period, the writer produces typical images of those who represented the various social forces

From *Prologue* we can study how the preparation for the bourgeois reform proceeded, and what part the various

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works* Vol 1, p 281

² See G V Plekhanov, *Works*, Vol. V, Moscow, 1925 p 179 (in Russian)

social groups and Chernyshevsky himself had in it. The novel gives a series of brilliant sketches of the social struggle in Russia before the reform of 1861 and a series of reports on the people of the time, the like of which is not to be found in the written histories of the period. In this sense *Prologue* combines artistic and scientific qualities and enriches our notions of events and people in the sixties.

Many a time Lenin wrote about the political insight of the author of *Prologue*. Among the politicians of his time Chernyshevsky was one who clearly understood the bourgeois character of the reform and immediately adopted a consistently revolutionary stand on all questions concerning it. The significance of *Prologue* is all the greater since besides its literary qualities, it acquired the importance of a major document revealing with amazing depth the essence of the political events in one of the most interesting periods of Russian history in the last century.

Lenin particularly emphasised Chernyshevsky's profound and excellent understanding of the reality of his time. In an intimate conversation with Sokolovsky, Volgin amazes him by his sceptical attitude to the reform. And in his judgements he does not confine himself to this, but goes further: *'Let the emancipation of the peasant be placed in the hands of the landlords' party. It won't make much difference*". To his interlocutor's remark that, on the contrary, the difference would be tremendous, because the landowners' party was opposed to allotting land to the peasants, Volgin replies emphatically, *"No, not tremendous, but insignificant. It would be tremendous if the peasants obtained the land without redemption payments. There is a difference between taking a thing from a man and leaving it with him, but if you take payment from him it is all the same. The only difference between the plan of the landlords' party and that of the progressists is that the former is simpler and shorter. That is why it is even better. Less red tape and, in all probability, less of a burden on the peasants. Those peasants who have money will buy land. As to those who have none, there's no use compelling them to buy it. It will only ruin them. Redemption is nothing but purchase. To tell the truth, it would be better if they were emancipated without land."*¹

¹ N. G. Chernyshevsky *Collected Works* Vol. 13 Moscow, 1949, pp. 187-88 (in Russian).

Lenin quoted these words in his book *What the Friends of the People Are* considering the analysis of the reform which they contain as expressing the genius of Chernyshevsky who at the time when the Peasant Reform of 1861 was carried out (when it was insufficiently elucidated in the West), so clearly understood its bourgeois character, discerning in his perspicacity that already then social classes irrevocably hostile to the working people and unconditionally predetermining the ruin and expropriation of the peasantry were reigning and governing in the Russian state and Russian society

Prologue was the first work in Russian literature to strip off the shroud of glorification in which the old literature of the nobility and bourgeoisie had enveloped the 1861 Reform. In depicting the political unity of the liberals and the feudal landowners, Chernyshevsky showed and condemned not only the exploiting essence of liberalism, but also the futility and cowardice of its programme

Liberal history writers endeavoured to convey the idea that the process of the reform was an uninterrupted chain of clashes between the liberal circles and the feudal reaction. In the light of this conception, the feudal landowners and the liberals were shown as two confronting camps almost antagonistic to each other. Thus liberalism was surrounded with a halo of imaginary victories and progressiveness. The novel *Prologue* showed by artistic expressive means the falseness of this legend about the notorious struggle between the feudal landowners and the liberals being the basis of the social struggle in nineteenth-century Russia.

Chernyshevsky's historical merit lies in his categorical refutation of this legend of reactionary history and his having proved the unity in basic class positions between the liberals and the feudal landowners in settling the peasant problem. In *Prologue* Chernyshevsky develops his views on this question most clearly and sharply. The separate remarks against the liberals in *Tale in a Tale*, "Alferiev", and *Little Stories* are here developed into an integral conception.

Chernyshevsky defended the idea of a peasant revolution. Thoughts of revolution were fermenting in those days in the minds of the oppressed serf peasants. Immense was their hatred of the landowners and the autocracy. But centuries of slavery had so trodden down and stultified the peasant masses that they did not support the revolutionary democrats

of the sixties. They were not capable of anything "more than scattered, isolated rebellions, or rather riots, devoid of any political purpose".¹ Lenin showed that Chernyshevsky had already become convinced by the end of the sixties that the peasantry was incapable of any organised revolutionary action.

Prologue ends with a masterly brushed picture of a lunch arranged by the triumphant Liberal Party jointly with the feudal landowners in the house of Platontsev. This picture reveals the basic idea of the novel. The background of a brilliant crowd of nobility imparts great relief and significance to the figure of the influential Petersburg journalist Volgin who is present and is easily recognised as Chernyshevsky himself. In this scene the author reproduces with great vigour his thoughts and reflections during the period of the completion of the bourgeois reforms of 1861. Volgin feels alone and alien among the exultant liberals.

This scene particularly attracted Lenin's attention. History dramatically revealed to Chernyshevsky that the peasant masses were then incapable, because of their backwardness, of anything but scattered spontaneous actions against the landowners. His thoughts and words were bitter: "A wretched nation, a wretched nation! A nation of slaves from top to bottom, all slaves", he thought, knitting his brow.²

He did not like the gentry, but there were moments when he felt no hostility towards them. Can one hate wretched slaves? And now such a mood had come over him. But this mood did not disarm Chernyshevsky. In his revolutionary consistency the great thinker clearly understood that for the working people to win political power, for their emancipation from oppression and exploitation, hard struggles and sacrifices were unavoidable. Volgin's words, full of grief, are a splendid expression of his love for his people. It was these words Lenin had in mind when he wrote in "On the National Pride of the Great Russians": "We remember that Chernyshevsky, the Great Russian democrat, who dedicated his life to the cause of revolution, said half a century ago:

"A wretched nation, a nation of slaves, from top to bottom, all slaves". The overt and covert Great Russian slaves (slaves with regard to the tsarist monarchy) do not like to

¹ V. I. Lenin *Collected Works* Vol 17, p. 122.

² N. G. Chernyshevsky *Collected Works* Vol 13, p. 197 (in Russian).

recall these words Yet, in our opinion, these were words of genuine love for our country, a love distressed by the absence of a revolutionary spirit in the masses of the Great Russian people There was none of that spirit at the time There is little of it now, but it already exists We are full of national pride because the Great Russian nation, too, has created a revolutionary class, because it, too, has proved capable of providing mankind with great models of the struggle for freedom and socialism ¹

Volgin sees clearly that the peasantry is downtrodden, ignorant and unorganised The peasant masses who spontaneously carried out actions against the feudal landowners were unorganised, disunited, and politically unaware The peasantry, the people, who had been the slaves of the land owners for hundreds of years, were still incapable at the time of feudalism's downfall of rising to fight on a broad scale, openly and consciously, for freedom With a feeling of distress Chernyshevsky pointedly develops this thought Volgin's reflections are full of profound drama for he clearly discerns the popular masses' lack of revolutionary spirit

Through the lines written by Lenin on Chernyshevsky looms the truthful heroic image of the inflexible revolutionary dedicated to his noble cause In this light it is quite obvious how groundless are all the various kinds of "innovatory" conceptions maintaining that Chernyshevsky went from the heroic illusions of *What Is To Be Done?* to the alleged "tragedy" and "scepticism" of *Prologue*

The time which Chernyshevsky spent in exile was distinguished by intense development of capitalism, for which the bourgeois reform of 1861 prepared all the requisite conditions Liberal Narodism broke with the revolutionary democratic traditions The renunciation of "the legacy", the transition from materialism to subjective idealism, were the results of Narodism's evolution from revolutionary peasant socialism to the socialism of the petty bourgeoisie Out of a political programme intended to rouse the peasantry to a socialist revolution against the foundations of exploiter society there grew a programme calculated to fill in the cracks while preserving the foundations of the old system

In his work *What the "Friends of the People" Are* Lenin characterises the complicated social processes in which

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works*, Vol 21, p 103

Chernyshevsky had to find his bearings. He assesses Chernyshevsky as an ideologist of revolutionary democracy, an outstanding representative of "the old Russian peasant socialism" which subsequently split up at the same time as the differentiation of the countryside took place under capitalism "making way for workers' socialism, on the one hand, and degenerating into vulgar petty bourgeois radicalism, on the other" ¹

In the writings of many liberal Narodnik authors Chernyshevsky on his return from exile is represented as a man lagging behind the development of reality, not understanding it, almost a spiritual corpse, as life had gone ahead while he had remained on the level of his previous concepts and notions.

V I Lenin's pronouncements on Chernyshevsky show how unfounded such a point of view was. In opposition to such opinions, Lenin demonstrated that the tragedy of Chernyshevsky's position during his exile and then in Astrakhan and Saratov consisted by no means in his lagging behind the interests of Russian society in the eighties, but in the liberal Narodnik intelligentsia's being inferior in its outlook to revolutionary democratism. Chernyshevsky's consistent revolutionary democratism and materialism testify that to the very end of his life he had a far higher understanding of socio-political life than those who reproached him for lagging behind.

We are fascinated by Chernyshevsky's life and his moral countenance. His remarkable works are brilliant manifestations of the splendid moral features and the world outlook of the revolutionary Russia of the last century, which independently sought advanced revolutionary theory and displayed unequalled energy and persistence in the struggle against tsarism.

The autocracy avenged itself cruelly on Chernyshevsky. He spent more than a score of years in exile in remote Siberia. But he did not go down on his knees to tsarism. Admiring Chernyshevsky's revolutionary steadfastness, Lenin brilliantly characterised the immense historical significance of his struggle. On May 19, 1919 he said in his speech "Deception of the People with Slogans of Freedom and Equality" "What would be the appraisal of an absolutely ignorant

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works*, Vol. 1 p. 264

man? Probably he would say 'Well, the man wrecked his own life, found himself in Siberia, and achieved nothing' This is a sample. If we were to hear an argument like this from some unknown person we would say. At best it comes from a man who is hopelessly ignorant and who is, perhaps, not to blame for being so ignorant that he cannot understand the importance of the activities of an individual revolutionary in the general chain of revolutionary events, or else it comes from a scoundrel, a supporter of reaction, who is deliberately trying to frighten the working people away from the revolution. I took the example of Chernyshevsky because, no matter which trend the people who call themselves socialists may belong to, there cannot be any serious disagreement in their appraisal of this individual revolutionary.¹

The revolutionaries of 1861, the most outstanding of whom was Chernyshevsky, remained isolated individuals and apparently were defeated. But in fact, Lenin said, they were the great figures of the day.²

¹ V. I. Lenin *Collected Works*, Vol 29, p 342

² *Ibid*, Vol 17, p 127

VI

LEV TOLSTOI, ARTIST AND THINKER

Lenin highly appraised Lev Tolstoi's mighty realistic talent. He spoke with conviction of the world significance of Tolstoi's work, of how, thanks to his genius, the period of preparation for the revolution in Russia was a step forward in the artistic development of the whole of humanity.

It was in 1908 that Lenin's famous article "Leo Tolstoi As the Mirror of the Russian Revolution" appeared. Subsequently, in 1910, Lenin published, in connection with the death of that writer, the articles "L. N. Tolstoi", "L. N. Tolstoi and the Modern Labour Movement", "Tolstoi and the Proletarian Struggle", "Heroes of 'Reservation'". These works answered the most urgent questions in the country's political and literary life after the revolution of 1905. Tolstoi was the centre of the struggle between various socio-political trends. The interpretation of his work and world outlook acquired considerable social significance, and for that reason what was written about Tolstoi at the time met with a lively response from Lenin.

In his article "Leo Tolstoi As the Mirror of the Russian Revolution" Lenin noted that the legal press was least of all interested in analysing Tolstoi's works from the point of view of the character of the Russian revolution and its motive forces. If the monarchist authors baited the great writer or depicted him as an inveterate enemy of progressive people, no less harmful were the attempts made by the liberals and Mensheviks to represent him as hardly less than the teacher of life, the "conscience of his time". What was thereby brought into the foreground was Tolstoi's weak, reactionary aspects, while the strong ones were passed over in silence,

Lenin's attacks on the false liberal and Menshevik interpretations of Tolstoi's legacy were a part of the struggle Lenin was waging for an upsurge in the revolutionary movement. His articles on Tolstoi, based on a concrete analysis of the social relations in Russia at the time, were inseparably connected with the tasks of the revolution. At the same time, Lenin combined political actuality with a profound sense of history which made it easy to single out all that was valuable in the great writer's artistic legacy.

As an artist Tolstoi marked a new period in the history of world literature: he posed with immense assurance and sincerity so many important questions concerning the basic features of the social system and attained such high artistic force that his works "rank among the greatest in world literature." The posing of great questions in the life of his time imparted to Tolstoi's work a high social significance and efficacy.

History long ago confirmed the truth of Lenin's assessment of Tolstoi's work. In his articles on Tolstoi Lenin answered with great precision the question as to what constituted the national and world significance of the great writer's work. Lenin saw that significance not only in the Tolstoi's greatness as a writer. The historical basis of Tolstoi's world significance, according to Lenin, was the scope of the Russian revolution. Tolstoi's greatness, "his universal significance as an artist and his universal fame as a thinker and preacher reflect, each in its own way, the universal significance of the Russian revolution."¹ He was able to convey the sentiments of millions of oppressed peasants, to outline their condition, to express their protest and their indignation.

Lenin considered the work of Tolstoi as the "mirror of the Russian revolution", as the reflection of the social contradictions in Russia from the sixties of the past century up to 1905. The juxtaposition of Tolstoi's name to the revolution, which he obviously did not understand and from which he kept aloof, might seem strange and artificial at first glance. But Tolstoi, an artist of genius, could not but reflect in his works some essential aspects of the revolution.

The historical standpoint in investigating Tolstoi's work was combined by Lenin with the tasks of the socialist movement at the time. If Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov sup-

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 16, p. 323.

ported a revolutionary-democratic peasant revolution, the specific feature and historical significance of Tolstol's criticism, Lenin wrote, consists in the fact that " it expressed, with a power such as is possessed only by artists of genius, the radical change in the views of the broadest masses of the people in the Russia of this period, namely, rural, peasant Russia For Tolstol's criticism of contemporary institutions differs from the criticism of the same institutions by representatives of the modern labour movement in the fact that Tolstol's point of view was that of the patriarchal, naive peasant, whose psychology Tolstol introduced into his criticism and his doctrine ¹

Through Tolstol, Lenin continued, speaks the whole of those millions of Russian peasants who already hate the masters of contemporary life but have not yet risen to conscious struggle against them Precisely these contradictions of the peasant revolution were reflected in the contradictions of Tolstol's world outlook and work

Whereas before Lenin Tolstol was written about mainly as the artist of the gentry and non resistance, Lenin was the first to see in his work the historical experience of the popular peasant masses, their revolutionary sentiments It was precisely this truth of life, this experience and these sentiments of the oppressed popular masses that suggested to Tolstol his angry protest against the rule of the landowners and the bourgeoisie, that promoted the understanding of the soullessness and hypocrisy of the ruling classes Often enough these ideas are contained not in direct pronouncements about the people's misfortunes, but in the view of life, in the way in which the various classes of society are broadly depicted It was precisely in this epic breadth with which the essential phenomena of the period were embraced, in his power of artistic penetration into the depths of its manifestations, that Lenin discerned Tolstol's greatness

Lenin's characterisation of Tolstol's work as a remarkable artistic embodiment of the people's life is of basic importance for understanding his writings

The great sea of the people, disturbed to its very depths, with all its weak and all its strong aspects, is reflected in Tolstol's work This characterisation given by Lenin of the content of Tolstol's writings provides the key to understand

¹ V I Lenin, *Collected Works* Vol 16, p 332.

ing the specific features of the epic scope of his work, his fascination and his actuality

Tolstoi's genius supplies the answer to many questions concerning the present as well as the past. This great writer's experience shows the paths for solving the always vitally important question of contemporaneity in art, and asserts that the greater an artist's significance, the deeper and with greater wealth definite aspects of reality will be reflected in his works. More than any writer before him Tolstoi was able to express with extraordinary brilliance and breadth in his works the historical, social and individual content of his time.

The theoretical content of Lenin's articles on Tolstoi comes close to the principles of cognition expounded in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. It is indicative that Lenin wrote his articles on Tolstoi immediately after finishing this philosophical work. For this reason it is possible to understand more fully the theoretical meaning of the description of Tolstoi as the mirror of the Russian revolution in the light of the scientific ideas elaborated in *Materialism and Empirio Criticism*.

The spiritual biography and the works of Tolstoi appear in Lenin's writings as irrefutable proof of the vital artistic significance of truthfulness in reflecting life and of penetrating into its deep-down processes. Lenin clearly proved that when Tolstoi was in agreement with the character and the tendency of reality, when he correctly distinguished its specifics, the forces of progress and the forces of stagnation, he attained the peaks of art. And, on the contrary, his weak points as an artist and a thinker are due to his substituting speculative utopian illusions for the genuine, real laws of life.

Maxim Gorky used to recall that Lenin felt very proud of Russian art represented by such men of genius as Tolstoi. "Once when I came to him, I saw a volume of *War and Peace* lying on the table.

"Yes, Tolstoi! I wanted to read the scene of the hunt and then I remembered I had to write to a comrade. And I have absolutely no time for reading. Only last night I read your small book on Tolstoi."

"He smiled and screwed up his eyes, stretched out pleasantly in his armchair, and, lowering his voice, continued rapidly

"What a figure, eh? What a tremendously big man! There s

an artist for you, old chap And do you know another amazing thing? Before this count there had never been a genuine *muzhik* in literature'

'Then, continuing to look at me through narrowed eyes, he asked

"Who is there in Europe that can be placed on a level with him?"

"And he himself replied

"Nobody"

"And rubbing his hands, he laughed with satisfaction"

But his pride in the great Russian writer did not hide from Lenin the reactionary aspects of Tolstolism While showing in all its fulness the world historical significance of Tolstoi's work, Lenin criticised the attempts to idealise his world outlook, to disregard his weak, reactionary aspects his negation of politics, his teaching on non resistance to evil, his apathy towards the revolutionary struggle, and his preaching of a new, purified religion According to Lenin, any attempt to idealise Tolstoi's teaching, to justify or attenuate his "non resistance", his appeals to "the soul", his calls for "moral improvement", his doctrine of "conscience and universal "love", his preaching of asceticism and quietism, result in the most immediate and profound harm Lenin resolutely repulsed the efforts of the Mensheviks, liberals and Tolstoists to proclaim Tolstoi "the universal conscience", the "teacher of life", and to characterise his doctrine as "integral", "harmonious" (e.g., the articles by M Nevedomsky and V Bazarov in the journal *Nasha Zarya*) These placed in the foreground the weak sides of Tolstoi's works, which they made use of against the revolution In his criticism of V Bazarov's article on Tolstoi, Lenin noted that it ignored the actual contradictions in Tolstoi's work and outlook, which denied the real contradictions in the Russian reality from 1861 to 1905 Bazarov singled out as the strongest aspect of Tolstoi's work the fact that he created a pure, human religion of which Kant and Feuerbach could only dream Lenin defined this as diverting attention from the concrete historico-economic and political questions which were in the foreground

Lenin's articles on Tolstoi have broad methodological significance, they are convincing demonstrations of power

¹ M Gorky, *Collected Works* Vol 17, pp 38-39 (in Russian)

and efficacy and at the same time subtlety in applying the Marxist Leninist method to literary criticism

The movement of time, the development of history and literature have furnished convincing proof of the vital perspicacity of Lenin's articles on Tolstoi. For half a century already, the discussion of the great writer's world outlook and work has centred round the problems set in Lenin's articles. And this is only natural, since Lenin touched on the most central, the most essential problems, without which it is impossible to assess the great artist correctly.

It is quite understandable that in the present struggle the reactionary ideologists try by every possible means to weaken and discredit the effectiveness of Lenin's view of Tolstoi. The poverty in ideas of those who oppose Marxist literary criticism can be clearly seen in Gleb Struve's article "Tolstoi in Soviet Criticism" in the *Russian Review*. The author blindly rejects all the writings of Soviet literary critics based on the works of V. I. Lenin. In contradiction to the real state of research into the work of the great writer, he declares only that to be interesting which is outside the influence of Lenin's articles. It is well known that nothing of any real significance has been achieved along those lines.

No futile attempts made by anti-socialist literary critics like Gleb Struve to refute Lenin's appraisal of Tolstoi's legacy can diminish its undeniable truthfulness. Romain Rolland, a prominent expert on Tolstoi's life and work, who had a subtle feeling for the originality of his artistic nature, wrote with enthusiasm about the innovatory significance of Lenin's articles. "For the literary historian the interest would be precisely to discern in Rousseau, Diderot and Voltaire in all the great path-finders in art, what transcends them, what in them, without their knowing it, belongs to times ahead, and which, if they had foreseen it, they would have disowned. It is this work that Lenin, in his blunt and lucid frankness, outlined in respect of a writer whom he loved among all others."¹

* * *

The depth with which Lenin analyses ideas, the passion of his criticism, are combined with subtlety in artistic analysis. Lenin not only defined the specific features of

¹ Romain Rolland, *Compagnons de Route*, Paris, 1961, p. 233.

Tolstoi's world outlook, he also showed the peculiarities of his artistic mastery. The artistic power, the mastery of Tolstoi were manifested first and foremost in that the period in which he lived 'is reflected in such bold relief' in his works. Lenin considered as a great merit of Tolstoi "his sober realism, his tearing away of all and sundry masks". Thus, in his article 'Leo Tolstoi and His Epoch', after quoting Levin's words in *Anna Karenina* (Here in Russia everything has now been turned upside down and is only just taking shape), Lenin asserted that it was "difficult to imagine a more apt characterisation of the period 1861-1905". Through Levin, Lenin wrote, Tolstoi "very vividly expressed the nature of the turn in Russia's history that took place during this half century".¹

In Lenin's view, Tolstoi was a writer fusing in unity epic breadth in artistically depicting a period with general psychological penetration into depths of the human soul which had hitherto never been probed. Of great actuality in our day is Tolstoi's rigorous uncompromising condemnation of dehumanised decadence, intended, as he said, "to save a small circle of parasites from boredom".

It would be a serious mistake to assume that the general problems concerning Tolstoi's work which are elucidated in Lenin's articles have exclusively historical significance and bear on phenomena which are not to be found in present-day life. Precisely those idealistic conceptions which were formulated in the first ten years of this century are being resurrected by certain literary critics and are given currency in our day. The one-sided false idea of Tolstoi as a preacher of submission who in the last years of his life condemned all manifestations of effective protest against the truthlessness of the exploiter system is developed with still greater persistence in our day.

* * *

By his birth and education Tolstoi belonged to the higher landed aristocracy. But in his last works he broke with the views of that section of society and severely criticised all the social principles of his time.

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 17, p. 49

Lenin, being a fervent supporter of truthful and realistic literature, considered as one of the most important assets of Tolstoi's work his criticism of all the state, social and economic principles of tsarist Russia

Russian and international reaction could not accept Tolstoi's forceful and effective talent for exposing vice and they tried to belittle and distort it. Now too the enemies of social progress abroad frequently endeavour to hide or distort all that is genuinely democratic and progressive in Tolstoi's legacy and to remove from his works what is bright, healthy and vivifying, so as to represent this realistic artist as a religious man, a mystic, aloof from the historic reality, to represent the citizen and patriot in the artist as an individualist entirely absorbed with concern for his own "spiritual advantage"

Reactionary ideologists emphasise only the weak aspects of Tolstoi's world outlook and do all they can to exaggerate "Tolstoinism", the philosophy of submission, often enough representing him as a liberal or a follower of American sectarians. But no matter how the bourgeoisie of our day try to resurrect Tolstoinism, it is already lost in the past.

The contemporary struggle around Tolstoi's name is closely connected with the general solution of questions concerning realism and the social content of artistic work. And while progressive world art develops Tolstoi's mighty artistic truth and humanism, the efforts of international reaction are aimed against his realism, against the social meaning, the humaneness of his work.

Typical in this respect are the opinions expressed by Frank O'Connor in his book *The Mirror in the Roadway*,¹ devoted to research on the European novel in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He proceeds from the current historical and literary concept which claims that realism in art is obsolete and must naturally and inevitably be replaced by other contemporary and modernistic forms. O'Connor sees the beginning of this process in the literature of the past century, and, as far as Russian literature is concerned, in the works of such writers as Lev Tolstoi on the one hand and Gogol and Dostoyevsky on the other. If this concept is applied more broadly, then Turgenev,

¹ Frank O'Connor *The Mirror in the Roadway A Study of the Modern Novel* London, 1957

Tolstoi and Flaubert are considered as traditionally realistic artists searching for integral truth who are superseded by the writers of 'devastated reality' (Dostoyevsky, Henry James, Hardy, Chekhov) and then by the modernistic idols who find the sources of their work outside life, "behind the mirror"

Lenin's conception of Tolstoi's greatness as an artist expressing the greatness of the Russian revolution provides a Marxist basis for a genuinely scientific elucidation, based on facts, of the sources from which Tolstoi's work drew its historical significance

Lenin refuted the version of official authors that Tolstoi's ideal consisted in a striving for quietude, in a partiality towards the old historical bases—orthodoxy and autocracy. In disclosing the "glaring contradictions" in Tolstoi's work and world outlook he showed that they reflected the complex antagonisms in society, the social phenomena and the historical tendencies which determined the psychology of the various sections of Russian society from 1861 to 1905. In passionately exposing the ruling system, Tolstoi displayed in his works the same inability to understand the causes of all the disasters and the means of overcoming them which was typical of the patriarchal peasantry. And for that reason, Lenin wrote, the contradictions in Tolstoi's outlook must be assessed from the point of view of the protest against advancing capitalism—the ruin of the masses and their deprivation of land which was to be heard from the patriarchal Russian countryside. From this point of view the contradictions in Tolstoi's views really mirror the contradictory conditions in which the historical life of the peasants was placed in the revolution.

The "glaring contradictions" in the work and teaching of Tolstoi are accounted for by the same contradictory conditions in which Russian life was placed in the last third of the nineteenth century.

In his article 'Leo Tolstoi As the Mirror of the Russian Revolution', Lenin wrote "The contradictions in Tolstoi's works, views, doctrines, in his school, are indeed glaring. On the one hand, we have the great artist, the genius who has not only drawn incomparable pictures of Russian life but has made first-class contributions to world literature. On the other hand we have the landlord obsessed with Christ. On the one hand, the remarkably powerful, forthright

and sincere protest against social falsehood and hypocrisy, and on the other, the 'Tolstoian', i.e., the jaded hysterical sniveller called the Russian intellectual, who publicly beats his breast and wails 'I am a bad, wicked man, but I am practising moral self perfection, I don't eat meat any more, I now eat rice cutlets' On the one hand, merciless criticism of capitalist exploitation, exposure of government outrages, the farcical courts and the state administration, and unmasking of the profound contradictions between the growth of wealth and achievements of civilisation and the growth of poverty, degradation and misery among the working masses On the other, the crackpot preaching of submission, 'resist not evil with violence' On the one hand, the most sober realism the tearing away of all and sundry masks, on the other, the preaching of one of the most odious things on earth, namely, religion, the striving to replace officially appointed priests by priests who will serve from moral conviction, i.e., to cultivate the most refined and, therefore, particularly disgusting clericalism Verily

*Thou art a pauper, yet thou art abundant,
Thou art mighty yet thou art impotent Mother Russia!*¹

Lenin's characterisation of the contradictions in Tolstoy's work and views is highly essential for understanding the mutual relationship between the artist's method and his world outlook, it rejects the theory of the so-called contradictionists, who see one of the chief laws governing the development of realistic literature in the contradiction between creative art and the writer's consciousness In Lenin's works on Tolstoy we see clearly that the specific feature of Tolstoy's artistic vision of the world is by no means reducible to a simplified conflict between method and world outlook, the real complication, the complex contradiction, permeates both his consciousness and his work

The problem of the contradiction in Tolstoy's spiritual development gives rise today as well to sharp polemics Our ideological enemies' negation of the significance of the Russian revolution for the development of Tolstoy's creative art leads to an eclipse of the real sources and a distortion of the type of inconsistency in his world outlook and his work Foreign literary critics have spread the unhistorical

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works*, Vol. 15, p. 205

view which considers the great writer's development as a development on one plane, from protest to the religious preaching of submission O'Connor, in particular, discerns the meaning of the writer's moral evolution in renunciation of will and action

If we consider the genuine picture of Tolstoi's real development we see that on the contrary it led to a sharper contradictions in his outlook and his work, to more pointed criticism of the existing social system, to an extremely sharp and courageous posing of most basic questions of life

Lenin's articles most convincingly show the groundlessness of all kinds of tendentious attempts to conceal the glaring contradiction in Tolstoi's world outlook and work, to consider him as static, bereft of will, only as an apologist of utopian religious illusions Lenin revealed the real concrete historical roots of Tolstoi's dualism, of his strong and his weak aspects Tolstoi's work dates mainly to the years during which the remnants of feudal serfdom still influenced the whole of Russian life and at the same time the growth of capitalist relations was intensifying After 1861 the old patriarchal Russia quickly disintegrated under the influence of capitalism This painful and sharp break up of all the "old" pillars of Russia was reflected also in Tolstoi's works and accounted for the "glaring contradictions" in his work and his thinking

The history of literature has already convincingly revealed the poverty, limitedness and triteness of the conceptions and arguments advanced by idealistic thought and aesthetics today In almost exactly the same way as half a century ago Tolstoi's genuine contradictions are replaced by false, artificial ones Michael Karpovich, professor of history at Harvard University, finds that the determining contradiction in the whole life of Tolstoi was the "conflict between his pagan temperament and his christian consciousness"¹ He says that Tolstoi, unlike Dostoyevsky, was an optimist by nature and knew, understood and appreciated the joys and beauty of life, and at the same time he was a christian moralist The conflict between these two opposite and incompatible principles, M Karpovich claims, gave rise

¹ Michael Karpovich, Tolstoi and Dostoevsky Two Spokesmen for Russia, in *World Literatures*, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1956, pp 241-52.

to a constant internal conflict which permeated the whole of his spiritual development. All this is nothing but putting a new face on views which have long since become common place and which see the sources of Tolstoi's, Merezhkovsky's and a number of other writers' dramas in the notorious dilemma of the pagan and christian principles. This version is not only standard and far from original, it is also worn out by long use and is hopelessly antiquated.

Lenin's characterisation of the glaring contradictions in Tolstoi's consciousness and work provides the key for a profound understanding of the specific features of his artistic work during that period. Unlike Tolstoi's picture of reality, which was as natural as life and convincing, his socio ethical pronouncements were narrow, metaphysical. That is why after the critical period one feels in Tolstoi's works a sharp contradiction between the shattering force of conviction and the vigour with which he depicts the secrets of the human soul and the narrowness of his moral preaching. The realistic might with which Tolstoi artistically presents the "dialectics of the soul" of his heroes often clashes with the poverty and falseness of his ethical precepts and conclusions.

In characterising the strong sides of Tolstoi's heritage Lenin clearly showed the instructive elements for the socialist movement that could be derived from Tolstoi's works. The heritage which he has left includes that which has not become a thing of the past, but belongs to the future. This heritage is accepted and is being worked upon by the Russian proletariat.¹

Tolstoi was convinced that the most important thing in the activity of the artist is the ability to see what is new in the phenomena of human life. The artist's active, effective intervention in life, his participation in all the most important "matters of the century", Tolstoi is convinced, transform art into a "matter of life". Only that art can be acknowledged as genuine and real, he maintained, which impels people to effective action. Tolstoi had profound faith in the victory of good and of life. He passionately exposed every kind of injustice.

Lenin wrote with bitterness that under tsarism Tolstoi was known as an artist only to a negligible minority even

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 16, p. 327

in Russia. He foretold with great perspicacity that Tolstoi's remarkable works reflecting a whole period in the history of the people would always be valued and read by the masses when they had created humane conditions of life for themselves and had overthrown the yoke of the landowners and capitalists.

Lenin's articles on Tolstoi played and still play an immense role in the people's ideological and aesthetic education, steering literature and art onto the road of truth, of socialist ideas and lofty moral seeking.

These sentiments of our contemporaries were expressed figuratively by Konstantin Fedin:

"Tolstoi will never grow old. He is one of those artists of genius whose words are living water. The spring gushes out inexhaustibly. Again and again we return to it and it seems to us that never in our lives have we drunk of such transparent, pure and fresh water."¹

Tolstoi's legacy will always be the pride of our culture, an indispensable effective integral part of the spiritual life of the Soviet people and of all humanity.

¹ K. Fedin, *The Writer, Art, Time*, Moscow, 1957, pp. 23-24.

VII

V I LENIN AND MAXIM GORKY

Besides brilliantly characterising the classical tradition of the past inherited by the new socialist literature, Lenin also defined long before the victory of the October Revolution the new elements in literature introduced by the liberation movement of the masses themselves and the spreading of socialist ideas

Lenin not only pointed out the popular character of the progressive writers work, he also disclosed the specific feature of each artist's link with the people's life and how this life was reflected in their work. If the revolutionary minded millions of oppressed serfs spoke through Belinsky and Chernyshevsky, if Lev Tolstoi reflected the interests of the patriarchal peasantry, Gorky appeared at a time when the revolutionary working class had emerged in the arena of history. Gorky threw in his lot with the Russian people, with its vanguard detachment, the working class.

A particularly remarkable theme in the history of twentieth-century literature is the theme of Lenin and Gorky. The close personal association between these two great men of our time is generally known. But the full significance of their friendship and their correspondence can be realised only through a deep understanding of the historical meaning and significance of their work as outstanding figures in the new stage of mankind's social life.

Remarkable first of all is Lenin's great love for and interest in the work of Gorky as a great literary artist promoted by the wakening masses of working people. From his first acquaintance with Gorky's early writings to the very end of his life Lenin invariably displayed a profound solicitude

for the writer's future. This he manifested first and foremost in establishing an entirely new and most accurate assessment of Gorky's artistic character and significance, in defending him against all attacks by reaction and in showing consistent concern that his powerful talent should develop in the right direction. Lenin was the first to qualify Gorky as a great artist of the popular masses and to perceive the profound link of his work with the mounting socialist revolution and the activity of the party.

N. K. Krupskaya wrote the following about the relations between Gorky and Lenin: "Vladimir Ilyich had a very high opinion of Alexei Maximovich Gorky as a writer. He particularly liked *Mother*, Gorky's articles in *Novaya Zhizn* about philistinism, all forms of which Vladimir Ilyich hated. He liked *The Lower Depths*, 'The Song of the Falcon', 'The Song of the Stormy Petrel', whose mood he found attractive, and pieces such as 'Creepy-Crawlies' and 'Twenty-Six and One'.

"I remember how Vladimir Ilyich burned with desire to go to the Art Theatre to see *The Lower Depths*, and how he would listen to *My Apprenticeship* in the last days of his life.

"Gorky wrote mainly about the workers, the poor people in the towns, about the depths, those sections which most interested Vladimir Ilyich, he described life as it was, in all its concreteness, seeing it with the eyes of a man who hated oppression, exploitation, banality, poverty of thought with the eyes of a revolutionary. And what Gorky wrote was close and understandable to Ilyich."¹

In the field of literature Lenin strove for a combination of truthfulness and artistic skill with socialist content. And in Gorky's work he found progressive literature inseparably connected with the life of the people.

Gorky's formation as a writer and the innovatory character of his works cannot be understood outside the integral historical and literary process which took place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But one cannot fail to notice in many articles and books about Gorky up to the present day a one-sided interpretation of the literary

¹ V. I. Lenin and A. M. Gorky *Letters, Reminiscences, Documents*, Moscow, 1958, p. 299 (in Russian).

process during that period. A number of researchers hold that by this time critical realism was in a state of decay, while naturalism and decadence dominated in Russian literature. The work of Maxim Gorky is generally characterised against this background, which is so inferior to it. Such a view does not correspond to the real state of literature, and, besides, it is in contradiction to Lenin's proposition that at that time Russian literature acquired world historical significance and that Tolstoy's work was a new step forward in the whole of mankind's artistic development.

Gorky's creative art matured in the third, proletarian, period of the liberation movement. At this time the Russian people's revolutionary struggle reached the peak of its development. This was the time of the movement of the very masses. The writer recorded in his works the birth of the new socialist era.

Representatives of reactionary criticism are known to try stubbornly to distort the meaning of Gorky's works, to present him as a supporter of "elevating deception", of assuagement, and most often as an author who sang the praise of the anarchistic superman. Giving Gorky his warm support, Lenin revealed how close he was to the people and how revolutionary was the content of his work.

All of Lenin's utterances on Gorky reveal to us the figure of a great revolutionary writer of a new type who devoted all his talent to the Revolution and to the cause of the country's socialist transformation.

A great role in Gorky's biography as a writer was played by the newspaper *Iskra*, which was founded by Lenin in 1900. We know that in 1901 Gorky expressly declared himself a supporter of *Iskra*, stating this with great conviction in a conversation with the poet Yakubovich. Complete unity of thought in the struggle against the autocracy and in defence of people's rights strengthened the organic link between *Iskra* and Gorky.

In directing *Iskra* Lenin warmly supported the writer's activity. The fourth issue of 1901 carried comments on the closing by tsarist police of the journal *Zhizn*, to which Gorky was a direct contributor. In his article "The Beginning of Demonstrations" Lenin branded the tyranny of the tsarist government which had banished Gorky, "a writer of European fame", from Nizhny Novgorod. In the following year,

1902, Lenin exposed the autocracy as the "dark force" by which "the students and religious sects, the peasants and the authors" were being "abused and outraged".¹ Lenin's *Iskra* ridiculed the "cowardly sages" who excluded Gorky from the Academy of Sciences, and described him as a fighter against autocracy.

Being the artistic mouthpiece of the popular masses who were awakening to conscious historical creative activity, Maxim Gorky opened up new roads in the development of world art and was the founder of socialist realism. Lenin's assessment of Gorky's work provides effective assistance in the struggle against present-day attempts made by the ideologists of reaction to diminish the significance of the writer's work and to distort its real meaning. In particular, many opponents of Soviet literature try to prove that the writer was far removed from the ideas of socialist revolution. For instance, the *Dictionary of Soviet Literature* published in the USA in 1957 alleges that Maxim Gorky was not at all the founder of socialist realism but only "the last chapter in the history of Russian realism of the nineteenth century". All these versions are contrary to facts and to historical truth.

Typical of Lenin was the understanding of Gorky's work as the greatest artistic expression of the revolutionary forces and ideas of the time.

Lenin always appreciated Gorky's versatile and powerful talent, his romantic as well as his realistic works, his artistic prose as well as his publicistic and critical writings. It was quite natural that Gorky's heroic romanticism, his call to revolutionary feats, merged organically with Lenin's articles and speeches as the embodiment in images of the revolutionary strivings of the period. Lenin emphasised with great perspicacity the vital force of Gorky's allegorical images of the Falcon and the Stormy Petrel, which personified the romanticism of the liberation struggle and forecast the storm of the revolution. Complete acknowledgement of the poetical force, the vitality and efficacy of Gorky's revolutionary romanticism is given in Lenin's article "Before the Storm": "The proletariat is preparing for the struggle, it is unitedly and boldly marching to meet the storm, eager

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, p. 414.

to plunge into the thick of the fight. We have had enough of the hegemony of the cowardly Cadets, those 'stupid penguins' who 'timidly hide their fat bodies behind the rocks "Let the storm rage louder!"'¹

The high opinion which Lenin expressed concerning the revolutionary romantic works of Gorky counteracts the various forms in which this trend of his work is denied or underestimated. The argument about Gorky's romanticism began as soon as his first works were published. The Narodist and liberal critics launched the campaign against Gorky by counterposing his romanticism to realistic truth. In particular, N. Mikhailovsky was among the first to describe his romanticism as a negation of ordinary life and for that reason related him to the decadents. It is on the basis of such a view that exotic figures of vagabonds are placed in the centre of Gorky's work, leaving in the shade the most important thing—that Gorky continued and deepened the realistic method in Russian literature and revealed the genuine truth of life.

The problem of Gorky's romanticism is a very complicated one. Starting off from the negative phenomena of reality, the writer sometimes one-sidedly pushed the significance of romanticism into the foreground. The contemporary supporters of "uplifting reality" in substance repeated uncritically and one-sidedly certain of Gorky's inaccurate statements. In 1918-1919, for instance, Gorky in his article "A Difficult Question"² called for the creation of ideal hypothetical heroes. This conception was determined to a large extent by the writer's peculiar understanding of the political reality of his time. It is instructive that these thoughts of Gorky's evoked objections from Lenin, who demanded variety in art. V. I. Kachalov relates in his reminiscences a conversation on this subject which Lenin had with Gorky in 1919. "The grand Hall of Columns of the House of Unions. There is animation in the artistic room. Vladimir Ilyich is with Gorky. Alexei Maximovich turns to me and says: 'See, I am arguing with Vladimir Ilyich about the new theatre public. There is no doubt that the new theatre public is no worse than the old theatre goers, that it is more attentive

¹ V. I. Lenin *Collected Works*, Vol. 11, p. 140.

² *Archives of A. M. Gorky*, Vol. III, Moscow, 1951, p. 220 (in Russian).

But what does it need? I say it only needs heroics. But Vladimir Ilyich maintains that it needs lyrics too that it needs Chekhov, that it needs the truth of life!'¹

There are no grounds for interpreting this statement of Gorky's one-sidedly forgetting that while insisting on ideal hypothetical heroes he also wrote realistic works for example the play *The Hardworking Word Polisher* which satirically ridicules speechifying and bureaucratic distortions.

The study of Gorky's legacy confirms the groundlessness of opposing his realism to romanticism. It has already been convincingly proved that one-sided systems which negate romanticism and the author's right to vision, imagination and fantasy lead to the substitution of naturalism for realism to platitude, colourlessness and unification of literature.

Lenin attentively examined every new work published by Gorky. In a letter to Potresov he especially singled out the literary section in the journal *Zhizn*. "Not a bad journal! Its literary section is really good, even better than any others!" Acquaintance with the contents of this journal shows that Lenin's assessment applies to Gorky's works *Foma Gordeyev*, "Kirkilka", "About the Devil", and "More About the Devil", which were printed in it. Lenin's letters from emigration also testify to his constant interest in Maxim Gorky. "Gorky Volume 5 we have (quite by chance)"² he writes to his mother. In his letter of June 7, 1902 he mentions "I received the Gorky and Skitalets books and read them with *very great* interest. I have read them myself and passed them on to others."³ In February 1903 Lenin wrote "What we should like would be to visit the Russian Art Theatre and see *The Lower Depths*!"⁴

The whole logic of Gorky's development led him to merge with the social-democratic movement. In this respect Lenin played an enormous role in Gorky's destiny. Just after the turn of the century Lenin tried to bring Gorky closer to the Party and to work in the revolutionary press. We know that a conversation took place in 1902 between Gorky and an *Iskra* representative and that it brought the writer close

¹ *Trud* 1936 No. 21

² V. I. Lenin *Collected Works* Vol. 34 p. 35

³ *Ibid.* Vol. 37 p. 338

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 347

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 355

to the revolutionary Bolshevik underground. Soon he became a member of the Moscow *Iskra* group and afforded it material aid.

It has already been elucidated that Gorky took an equally active part in the work of the underground Nizhny Novgorod *Iskra* organisation. At that period he entered into close relations with the Sormovo revolutionary workers Pavlov, Zalomov, Pyatibratov and others. This gave him the initial material for his story *Mother* and helped to link his life irrevocably with the Bolshevik Party. Later Gorky wrote "I felt the genuine revolutionary spirit precisely in the Bolsheviks, in Lenin's articles, in the speeches and the work of the intellectuals who followed him"¹ Gorky himself dated the beginning of his organisational association with the Bolsheviks to 1903. "The Bolsheviks have possessed me for about twenty five years already," he pointed out in 1928 in his article *To the Mechanical Citizens of the USSR*. "I became their (the Bolsheviks) hanger on as early as 1903,"² he noted in another passage of this article. The mention of 1903 has a definite historical meaning. It was in that year that the Second Congress of the RSDLP took place, at which, under Lenin's leadership, the basis of a militant revolutionary party of a new type was laid.

When in autumn 1903 *Iskra* went over to the Mensheviks, Lenin resigned from the editorial board, and in January 1905 he took the leadership of the new Bolshevik newspaper *Vperyod*. Maxim Gorky helped in the publication of this paper. In reply to a letter of R. S. Zemlyachka reporting that Gorky was a fellow thinker of the Bolsheviks and had agreed to help the Party's new press organ, Lenin wrote from Geneva a letter containing congratulations on the successful beginning of the writer's participation in the publication of the newspaper. This letter bears testimony to Lenin's constant interest in all the forms of Gorky's participation in the Party's activity. When the tsarist government imprisoned Gorky in the Peter and Paul fortress in connection with the events of January 9, 1905, Lenin wrote in *Vperyod* defending the writer and exposing the autocracy.

During the period of the first Russian revolution Gorky actively contributed to founding the first legal Bolshevik

¹ M. Gorky *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, p. 436 (in Russian).

² *Ibid.*, p. 439.

newspaper, *Novaya Zhizn*, whose editorial board was headed by Lenin from the ninth issue onwards. This paper carried Lenin's famous article "Party Organisation and Party Literature". It was at one of the conferences on the work of the newspaper on November 27, 1905 that Lenin and Gorky first met.

Lenin highly appraised Gorky's "Notes on Philistinism", which was directed against the ideological principles of life of the bourgeois intelligentsia, against the squalid spiritual world of the representatives of the ruling classes in capitalist society. When "Notes on Philistinism" was attacked editorially, Lenin took up Gorky's defence. The militant trend of "Notes on Philistinism" against bourgeois individualism made it congenial to V. I. Lenin. His approval of it is borne out by the fact that a few years later he asked Gorky to write again in the same genre.

An important event in Gorky's life was his participation in the Fifth (London) Party Congress. On his return he gave his impressions in a letter: "The congress did me a terrific lot of good. Much that was obscure became clear, the psychology of Menshevism became understandable and amazingly instructive." His presence at the congress and the close acquaintance with the work of the Social Democratic organisation, which was growing in struggle, intensified Gorky's feeling of closeness with Lenin and confirmed his comprehension of the Party as his spiritual home. In this light particular significance should be attached to what Lenin said to Gorky at the congress in connection with his book *Mother*: "The book is needed, many workers took part in the revolutionary movement without awareness, spontaneously, now they will read *Mother* with great profit for themselves." By these words Lenin revealed the fundamental significance of this classical work reflecting the historical process of uniting advanced socialist theory with the mass working class movement.

Lenin's appraisal of *Mother* as a "timely" book is important from another aspect. In this and all Lenin's other utterances on Gorky, Lenin emphasised the writer's inseparable link with the revolutionary socialist movement. Lenin's appraisal of the book helped Gorky to define more precisely

¹ M. Gorky, *Collected Works*, Vol. 29, p. 20 (in Russian).

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 17, p. 7.

the content of *Mother*. He defined in a realistic manner the image of the revolutionaries, freed them of abstract features, gave them more justified concrete and historical qualities. Unneeded comparisons of socialism with religion, and so on, were also removed from the story.

Mother enriched world art with the live figure of the new hero of the time — the conscious proletarian revolutionary full of the most courageous romanticism. In his appreciation of *Mother* Lenin emphasised its generalising, typical significance.

The literature of socialist realism emerged and developed under the banner of Lenin's firm faith in the victory of the revolutionary forces in the great future of the socialist Motherland. This faith permeates Gorky's works and their heroes. The passionately expected future is just as romantic as it is real. "Splendid people!" Nikolai speaks about the workers who had taken the path of revolutionary struggle, "so strong and sensitive and anxious to learn! When you look at them you can't help thinking that some day Russia will be the most democratic country in the world!"¹

When the newspaper *Proletary* became the central press organ of the Bolsheviks, Lenin again posed the question of Gorky's participation in its work. On February 2, 1908, he wrote to him: "Everything is in running order, in a day or two we shall publish an announcement. You are on our list of contributors. Drop us a line as to whether you could give us something for the first issues (something after the manner of your *Notes on Philistinism* in *Novaya Zhizn*, or fragments from a story you are writing, etc.)"² Gorky responded willingly to this proposal. Lenin wrote to him on February 13, 1908: "I am very, very pleased with your plan of writing short paragraphs for *Proletary* (the announcement has been sent to you). Naturally, if you are working on something big, do not break it off!"³

The constancy and consistency of Lenin's highly solicitous attitude to the great artist was clearly revealed during this period. Lenin criticised an article written by Gorky for *Proletary* in which, Lenin said, the author expounded the views of "a certain trend." At the same time Lenin pointed

¹ Maxim Gorky *Mother* Moscow, 1971 p. 362

² V. I. Lenin *Collected Works* Vol. 34, pp. 377-78

³ *Ibid.*, p. 385

out that most of Gorky's article was not connected with Bogdanov's philosophy. In polemising with Gorky Lenin treated him as a writer who was heart and soul with the working class and the Party, as a contributor to the Party paper *Proletary*. On March 16 he wrote to him "It would be fine if you could manage to write for *Proletary* without your major works suffering."¹ In April Lenin reiterated his request "You wrote that you had long finished your big work and were going to help us in *Proletary*. But when? What about you doing a small article on Tolstoi or something of that sort? Send us a line whether you intend to do so."²

What Lenin said about an article on Tolstoi doubtlessly referred to a critical appraisal by Gorky of the preaching of submission and non resistance in "Notes on Philistinism". There are all grounds for thinking that Lenin considered the basic trends of this criticism by Gorky to be correct.

V I Lenin saw in Gorky one of the biggest writers, one who excellently embodied in his work the partisan principle in literature. Gorky's works express with immense artistic force and tangibility Lenin's ideal of free literature. For his part, Gorky always emphasised the determining significance of the Communist Party and V I Lenin in his destiny as an artist. Of great value in this respect is the letter which Gorky wrote to Lenin in June or July 1905 and which shows quite visibly how the great writer appreciated the prestige and fascination of the Party leader. In this letter Gorky addresses Lenin as the head of the Party and expresses to him his profound respect and trust. In the following years too the writer often spoke of the Party as of his spiritual home. "Bolshevism is dear to me," he wrote to A. Amfiteatrov at the end of 1909, "inasmuch as it is monists who make it, just as socialism is dear and important precisely because it is the only way by which man will arrive most quickly at complete and profound awareness of his *personal* human dignity."

"I see no other road. All other roads lead away from the world, this one alone leads into the world."³

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works* Vol. 34, p. 387

² Ibid. p. 391

³ M. Gorky *Collected Works* Vol. 29, p. 107 (in Russian)

Subsequently the writer frequently stressed that he was inseparable from the ideas of the Communist Party

Maxim Gorky's works acquired a particular historical significance inasmuch as a broad picture of the life of society was combined in them with advanced socialist ideas and connected with the activity of the Communist Party, 'the brain, the honour and the conscience of our epoch'. It is for this reason that he is rightly considered the first classic and figure in Soviet literature. Lenin's opinion of the story *Mother* emphasises as a matter of principle this aspect of Gorky's work, which showed with immense artistic expressiveness the growth of the popular masses' awareness.

Lenin's correspondence with Gorky graphically revealed the writer's close link with the Party's work. At the present time the international ideologists of reaction are trying to spread the version that the partisanship principle is contrary to the nature of art, hinders the artist from revealing his creative individuality. The example of the outstanding writer, Maxim Gorky, is an unquestionable testimony to the elevating role played in artistic creation by the artist's frank party stand, the stand of serving the people. We see from Lenin's correspondence with Maxim Gorky how consistently he endeavoured to draw the writer into the immediate work of the Party.

Full of especial significance was the fact that during the period of his polemic with Gorky on philosophical questions Lenin came out in *Proletary* with the article 'The Bourgeois Press Fable About the Expulsion of Gorky'. Replying to the fiction in the bourgeois press about Gorky's expulsion from the Party, Lenin stressed the writer's indissoluble connection with the revolutionary working class movement. "Their labour is in vain. Comrade Gorky by his great works of art has bound himself too closely to the workers' movement in Russia and throughout the world to reply with anything but contempt!"¹

Gorky's participation in the work of the Party strengthened his links with life, promoted a more correct and profound understanding of the fundamental processes of historical development. The Party and V. I. Lenin systematically drew Gorky's attention to the study of reality

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 16, p. 106

in its revolutionary development, in the struggle of the new against the old. As early as in 1913, Lenin recommended that Gorky should "roam about in Russia" to acquire knowledge of the people's life, to gain the possibility of striking with new force at tsarism. Later, during the Civil War, Lenin advised the writer to observe the country's new life "to observe from below where it is possible to survey the work of building a new life, in a workers' settlement in the provinces or in the countryside."

Lenin's utterances about Gorky's work single out as an important feature of advanced revolutionary art attention to the revolutionary development of life, to the present Gorky's work, the art of socialist realism, brought a new cycle of subjects and problems, first and foremost the embodiment of the growth of the revolutionary forces, of the process of transforming the masses of ordinary people into conscious masters of the land, into transformers of the world, the embodiment of the new type of man, the movement of society towards socialism.



An integral part of all Lenin's judgements on Gorky is the line towards a literature of great social problems, towards connecting it with the basic political processes of the time. Stressing Gorky's vanguard position in contemporary literature, Lenin always frankly expressed his negative attitude to anything which could weaken his ideological stand. Lenin helped the writer to understand the social trends of his time, to carry still higher the banner of revolutionary art which had made him the popular masses' own beloved artist. Thus Lenin pointed out to Gorky the illusiveness of his hope for a possible general democratic union with an intelligentsia which counterposed itself to Marxism and Social Democracy, he censured Gorky's "unfortunate attempt to lower himself to a general democratic standpoint instead of the proletarian standpoint."

Lenin warned Gorky against having any part in publications alien to the revolution. A case in point was Amfiteatrov's *Sovremennik*. When Lenin learned that Gorky had agreed to contribute to this journal he wrote him a letter insistently advising him to abandon his intention "a journal should either have a perfectly definite, serious and

consistent *trend*, or it will inevitably disgrace itself and those taking part in it ' Lenin warned Gorky that his name, popular among the masses might prove to be a convenient screen for Amfiteatrov The latter's journal, Lenin said in his letter, was "a political enterprise in which there is not even a realisation that a general leftism is not enough for a policy, that after 1905 to talk seriously about politics without making clear one's attitude towards Marxism and Social Democracy is out of the question, impossible, inconceivable"¹

Opposing Gorky's participation in *Sovremennik*, Lenin noted " this is something quite different from symposia aiming at a concentration of the best forces of *belles lettres*

Lenin drew Gorky's attention to the announcement, which said that *Sovremennik* was published "with the closest and *exclusive* (that is what is printed! illiterately but so much the more pretentiously and significantly) participation of Amfiteatrov' and with you as a regular contributor"²

Soon after this, Gorky sent Amfiteatrov a letter laying down the following conditions "In the announcement about the *Sovremennik* it says 'is published with the closest and exclusive participation of A Amfiteatrov' this is hardly literate And further, in thick type with M Gorky as a regular contributor'

"This will not do

"I insistently ask you to say that the thick type and 'regular contributor' be removed without fail

'This is indispensable I ask you to print my name on the same line as the names of the other contributors, I insist on this'³

Later, on Lenin's advice, Gorky gave up contributing to the journal

Gorky drew the same conclusion after Lenin's criticism of the journal *Zaprosy Zhizni* V I Lenin and Maxim Gorky both had exactly the same ideas about the journal *Zavety* Lenin vigorously attacked the novels by Ropshin (B Savinkov) *The Pale Horse* and *What There Was Not*, which were published in the journal and which he described as "dis-

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works*, Vol 34 p 435

² *Ibid*, p 434

³ M Gorky, *Research Material*, Vol 1, 1937, p 205 (in Russian)

graceful works" Gorky broke off with this journal, giving as an explanation for this step the publication of Ropshin's renegade works in it

The peculiarity of Gorky's position, which was so precisely defined by Lenin, was reflected in his constant attention as an artist to the character of the revolutionary Bolshevik. It was a fact of determining significance that even in the period of his delusions the writer was firm and convinced in considering the Party as his spiritual home, and magnified the image of the proletarian revolutionary. At the time when the decadents were mocking at the revolution, Gorky proudly proclaimed the spiritual beauty of the image of the Russian revolutionary. In a letter to S. A. Venigero in July 1908 he wrote "Personally I will tell you that for me the revolution is just as strictly legitimate and good a phenomenon of life as the tremors of a child in its mother's womb, and the Russian revolutionary with all his shortcomings is a phenomenon the equal of which I do not know as regards spiritual beauty and strength of love of the world."¹ Gorky called himself a "cubic Social Democrat."

During the period of upsurge in the revolutionary movement just before the First World War, Lenin included Gorky among the contributors to the newspaper *Zvezda*. Up to the twenty-fourth issue (July 24, 1911) *Zvezda* was in the hands of the Mensheviks and Gorky expressed adverse opinions of it. He wrote to Yordansky, one of its editors: "As regards *Zvezda* I will tell you don't be offended it is dullish. It is cold and tiresome and, as it were, done under obligation by a tired hand and an unbelieving heart."² After *Zvezda* went over to the Bolsheviks, Gorky published his "Tales of Italy" in it. These evoked Lenin's enthusiasm. "It would be a good thing to get a *revolutionary* manifesto like the Tales in *Zvezda*,"³ he wrote to Gorky. "You helped *Zvezda* very, very much with your splendid Tales, and that made me extremely joyful, so that the joy if I am to talk straight outweighed my sadness at your 'affair' with the Chernovs and the Amfiteatrovs."⁴ Especially congenial

¹ M. Gorky, *Collected Works*, Vol. 29, p. 74 (in Russian).

² *Ibid.*, p. 122.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

⁴ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 35, p. 23.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

to Lenin was Gorky's philosophy of asserting life, his personification of the beautiful in characters of ordinary working people, his exaltation of their class solidarity and international friendship

The activity of *Zvezda* immediately preceded the appearance of *Pravda*, whose policy in literary questions was the direct continuation of the principles earlier applied by Lenin

Lenin continued as in previous years to call on Gorky for contributions to *Pravda*. His solicitude for Gorky and his striving to maintain friendly relations with him were testified by Lenin's letter to the newspaper's editorial board "I wrote to Gorky as you requested, and received a reply from him today He writes

"Send the enclosed note to *Pravda* There is no question of fee, that is nonsense I will work for the paper and will soon begin sending it manuscripts I couldn't do it up to now only because I have been desperately busy, putting in about 12 hours a day, it's back breaking work "

"As you see, Gorky's attitude is very friendly ¹ I hope you will reciprocate, and see that *Pravda* is sent to him regularly The forwarding department sometimes slips up, so that from time to time you must check and check again

"If you want to retain his friendly interest, send him (through me) any new publication which might be of interest to him, and also any particular manuscripts "²

In January 1913 Lenin requested Gorky to undertake the management of the literary department of *Pravda* "I am writing to *Pravda* today that they, after asking Tikhonov, should print a notice that Tikhonov and you are in charge of the literary department of *Pravda*. Isn't that so? Write to them yourself if they don't print it."³ Before the revolution *Pravda* carried a number of Gorky's works He also got young working class authors to work on the paper, helping them on the literary side

During this period *Pravda* and V I Lenin personally gave constant support to Gorky's actions against the reactionary trends in literature and social thought.

¹ "I enclose Gorky's letter to *Sovremenny Mir* requesting them to hand his *Tale* over to you Get it as soon as possible (Footnote by Lenin)

² V I Lenin *Collected Works*, Vol. 36, p. 200.

³ *Ibid* , Vol 35, p 72.

On Lenin's initiative Gorky assumed the management of the literary department of the legal Bolshevik literary journal *Prosveshcheniye* from April 1, 1913. In reply to Gorky's acceptance to take charge of this department of the journal Lenin wrote. "It is a great joy to me, and to all of us, that you are *taking up Prosveshcheniye*

"Now it really will be splendid if little by little we draw in fiction writers and set *Prosveshcheniye* going! Excellent! The reader is new, proletarian, we shall make the journal cheap, you will let in only democratic fiction, without moaning, without renegade stuff"¹ Of special significance in this programme outlined by Lenin are the words about fiction without moaning, without renegade stuff. This problem was of urgent significance in the development of the literature of those years, since novels like those of Vinnichenko and Ropshin were still published in numbers.

From Lenin's letters we see that he paid extraordinary attention to Gorky's work in the journal *Prosveshcheniye*. "How do you stand about a little article or a story for the May issue of *Prosveshcheniye*?"² Lenin asked Gorky in one of his letters in May 1913. *Prosveshcheniye* carried Gorky's essay "Omnipresent", which wonderfully conveyed the pathos of the working people's fraternal internationalism.

Gorky's work to unite progressive writers constitutes an outstanding page in the history of Russian literature in the twentieth century. At the very beginning of the century Gorky did great editorial and organisational work, rallying realistic writers round the publishing house Znaniye. The activity of this publishing house assumed particularly great scope in the years of the first Russian revolution. The Znaniye writers, headed by Gorky, continued during the period of reaction the traditions of classical realism in counteraction to the various forms of modernistic decadence. Lenin's attitude to the struggle continually sharpening during the first decade between the realistic and decadent trends in Russian literature is clearly expressed in his opinions on the Znaniye writers. He called the authors who published their works in the Znaniye collections "the best forces of *belles-lettres*"³ Such an appraisal excellently con-

¹ Ibid., Vol. 35, pp. 83-84.

² Ibid., p. 97.

³ Ibid., Vol. 34, p. 434.

veys Lenin's approval of the progressive realistic literary works printed in the Znaniye publications

During the period of the first Russian revolution, Znaniye, besides legal publications, put out a lot of illegal party literature. On Gorky's initiative and by agreement with the CC of the Bolshevik Party, the publishing house began to put out a cheap library of Marxism. The series included a number of works by Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, Lafargue, Mehring, Bebel and other authors. V. I. Lenin himself took part in editing some of the "Cheap Library" publications. Besides this, I. P. Ladyzhnikov's publishing house was founded in Geneva with Gorky's active participation. This publishing house had connections with the CC of the Party and in 1905, after Lenin's departure from Geneva it was moved to Berlin. Lenin repeatedly noted the immense significance of this aspect of Gorky's work, which promoted the rallying of progressive writers and the development of the revolutionary press.

After the defeat of the 1905 Revolution, Gorky militantly opposed the decadents, reactionaries and renegades and published his well known articles "Destruction of the Personality", "On Cynicism", and others. Lenin gave Gorky warm support in assembling and organising the best writer forces in the struggle against reaction in literature. Gorky's work in the Znaniye association played a great role in rallying writers of the realistic trend. But when the leadership of Znaniye began to depart from the line of principle, to call in writers of obviously alien trends and to let itself be influenced by decadence and commercial interest, Lenin helped Gorky to leave the association and approved his decision to break off relations with K. P. Pyatnitsky.

In literary criticism Lenin's attitude to Gorky is not unfrequently presented simplified, in the form of a whole series of instructions which are often treated in a primitive and shallow manner. This results in an incorrect and primitive idea of Gorky's artistic development as a continuous chain of errors which were pointed out mainly by Lenin, from whom they drew comment. Actually the relations between the two great men—the leader of the socialist revolution and the outstanding writer of our time—were not reducible to one-way tuition by Lenin as appears from the work of many Gorky critics. We must not forget that the development of the socialist Marxist ideology was in itself

an historically very complex process in the course of which many major Party figures not unfrequently made mistakes. In Gorky's case this process was complicated still more since it was associated with the specifics of artistic perception and with the writer's individual features. Lenin's attitude to Gorky showed that he had a profound understanding of the peculiarities of a writer's personality. That is why we do not find in the correspondence between Lenin and Gorky any sign of a magistral attitude, but witness, as it were, an extremely instructive friendly exchange of opinion, a conversation on the main questions of life, ideology and art.

Despite Gorky's temporary hesitations and delusions, Lenin always felt in him a fellow thinker, a genuine people's writer. That is why, for all the sharpness of his critical utterances, Lenin constantly stressed Gorky's profound link with the popular masses, the vigour of his artistic writing. And even in the writer's errors Lenin saw also the historically determined difficulties and complexity of forming a revolutionary world outlook in the depths of the popular masses which Gorky presented in his work. Lenin fought for the correctness of his ideological positions so that the words of this artist of the people would sound with all their force.

The whole content and the whole spirit of Lenin's letters to Gorky and of their conversations were directed against the attempts made by the reactionaries to class the great writer among the ordinary supporters of somebody else's thoughts or conceptions. Indicative in this respect is Lenin's correspondence with Gorky from 1908 to 1910 included. At that time Lenin vigorously opposed Gorky's drawing close to the *Vperyod* group of *otzovists* and Machists and criticised the writer's incorrect steps.

The influence of god building is known to have been reflected in Gorky's story "Confession", in which the working class revolutionary movement was groundlessly connected with god building ideas, with the building of a "new" religion. Lenin expressed an adverse opinion of "Confession", stressing in a letter to Gorky: "God-seeking differs from god building or god-creating or god making, etc., no more than a yellow devil differs from a blue devil."¹ Lenin's

¹ V I Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol 35, p 121

criticism of Gorky's god building delusions was closely connected with the subsequent struggle against Machist Bogdanovist idealism, the most complete document of which struggle was *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. Lenin persistently explained to Gorky the substance of his delusions, the idealistic character of a new "socialist" religion "people the god", through which it was alleged one could pass from individualism to a collectivistic understanding of the world.

In his letters Lenin patiently explained to Gorky the reactionary and idealistic substance of Bogdanov's "philosophy", its revisionist character, the futility of the writer's attempts to reconcile the Bolsheviks with the Bogdanov group, Marxism with Machism. But not in a single one of his letters or utterances did Lenin ever place Gorky's views on the same level as Bogdanov's, as some Gorky critics sometimes claim. For this reason justice demands that the great writer be placed apart from the various small groups and factions. Lenin constantly emphasised the link of Gorky's mighty talent with the revolution. Lenin's utterances consistently expressed the thought that the god building and all other delusions of Gorky were alien and heterogeneous to the basic content of his works.

Asserting Gorky's authority in socialist *belles lettres*, Lenin showed that to utilise the writer's name "to bolster up Machism and otzovism is an *example* of how one should not treat *authorities*."¹ Gorky is undoubtedly the greatest representative of *proletarian* art, one who has done a great deal for this art and is capable of doing still more in the future."² Lenin wrote in his "Publicist's Notes" He expressed the conviction that Gorky would not, like intellectual sceptics, be reduced to "despair of the working class movement" and the ideals of democracy. Lenin's well known pronouncement about the immense service which Gorky rendered to the working class movement was accompanied by the encouraging assurance "You will render a still greater service yet, it is on no account permissible for you to fall a prey to moods of depression evoked by episodes of the struggle abroad."³

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works*, Vol 16 p 207

² Ibid Vol 34 p 401]

³ Ibid , p 415.

Gorky, for his part, listened attentively to Lenin's advice. He disregarded the Mensheviks' and Cadets' praise for his "Confession". We see from Lenin's letters to Gorky in mid November 1913, that the writer condemned this work. Prior to this Lenin had also written with satisfaction that Gorky "has become disillusioned with Bogdanov and has realised the falsity of the latter's behaviour"¹ The resoluteness of Gorky's solidarity with Lenin as regards his story "Confession" was shown by his next big prose work, the story "Summer". Here the author polemised as it were, with a number of propositions which he had previously formulated in "Confession", and radically rejected the idea of uniting the people on the basis of a new religion. The transforming force of the people's life in "Summer" consists in the emancipation strivings, the ideas of revolution and socialism, which were penetrating more and more broadly among the masses. Reactionaries in those days represented the *muzhik* as an obscure force guided by uncurbed animal instincts. Gorky expressed the awakening of the rural population, the appearance in the countryside of the new type of peasant about whom Lenin wrote "A new type appeared in the Russian village the class-conscious young peasant. He associated with 'strikers', he read newspapers, he told the peasants about events in the cities, explained to his fellow villagers the meaning of political demands, and urged them to fight the land-owning nobility, the priests and the government officials"².

During the imperialist war, Lenin, then in emigration, was prevented by wartime conditions from corresponding with Gorky. During the initial months of the war the writer did not understand the character of events and shared certain chauvinist prejudices. Critical comment from Lenin was evoked by his signature to the proclamation "From the Writers and Artists", which was written in the spirit of bourgeois patriotism and justification of tsarist Russia's war against Germany.

Lenin's article "To the Author of *The Song of the Falcon*" was published for the first time in the latest edition of his collected works. In it Lenin said

"Every class-conscious worker will feel a pang when he

¹ Ibid, Vol. 23 p. 243

² Ibid

sees Gorky's signature alongside that of P. Struve under the chauvinist clerical protest against German barbarity

The workers have grown accustomed to regard Gorky as their own. They have always believed that his heart beats as warmly as theirs for the cause of the proletariat, and that he has dedicated his talent to the service of this cause.

"That is why they keep sending messages of greeting to Gorky, and that is why his name is so dear to them. It is this trust on the part of the class-conscious workers that imposes on Gorky a certain *duty* to cherish his good name and to refrain from putting his signature to all sorts of cheap chauvinist protests which could well confuse the workers who lack political consciousness. They could be led astray by Gorky's name. Struve's name will not confuse any worker, but Gorky's may.

"Therefore, the class-conscious workers, who well realise the falsehood and the vulgarity of this hypocritical protest against the 'German barbarians', must feel that they have to rebuke the author of *The Song of the Falcon*.¹

Lenin valued the positive aspects of Gorky's work as publisher of *Letopis*, which opposed militaristic intoxication. However in the editorial offices of this journal a bloc of contributors alien to Marxism was formed, and Lenin criticised the journal for this. It could be thought that under the influence of such an environment Gorky was unable to assess Lenin's works against imperialism at their worth. Lenin sent his new works *The Data on the Laws Governing the Development of Capitalism in Agriculture and Imperialism*, *the Highest Stage of Capitalism* to Gorky at *Letopis* for the Parus publishers. Shortly afterwards Lenin wrote in this connection to Inessa Armand "My manuscript about imperialism has reached Petersburg, and now they write today that the publisher (and this is Gorky! oh, the calf!) is dissatisfied with the sharp passages against who do you think? Kautsky! He wants to get in touch with me about it!!! Both laughable and disappointing."²

Gorky's temporary separation from Lenin and the influence of his Menshevik and philistine environment caused the writer to commit a number of serious mistakes. And as always, while criticising the writer's incorrect positions, Lenin at the same time considered it necessary to stress

¹ V. I. Lenin *Collected Works* Vol. 41, pp. 344-45.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 35, p. 259.

that he was "an enormous artistic talent which has been, and will be, of great benefit to the world proletarian movement" ¹

Lenin consistently pursued his line in relation to Gorky also in the subsequent very complex conditions, in particular when Gorky was contributing to the Menshevik paper *Novaya Zhizn* (1917-1918)

A number of articles in *Pravda* were devoted to criticism of Gorky's delusions. But the Party and V. I. Lenin were always confident that the great proletarian writer would soon overcome his mistakes. "Gorky is too dear to our socialist revolution," one of the *Pravda* articles said in January 1918. "For us not to believe that he will soon enter the ranks of its ideological leaders in the place which long since belongs to him as the stormy petrel of the world social revolution" ²

Lenin entirely revealed Gorky's erroneous sentiments during the revolutionary period, their origin and their meaning, in a letter to him on July 31, 1919. "If you want to observe you must observe from below, where it is possible to survey the work of building a new life, in a workers' settlement, in the provinces or in the countryside. There one does not have to make a political summing up of extremely complex data, there one need only observe. Instead of this, you have put yourself in the position of a professional editor of translations, etc., a position in which all your strength is frittered away on the sick grumbling of a sick intelligentsia, on observing the 'former' capital in conditions of desperate military peril and fierce privations."

"You have put yourself in a position in which you *cannot* directly observe the new features in the life of the workers and peasants, i.e., nine tenths of the population of Russia in which you are compelled to observe the fragments of life of a former capital, from where the flower of the workers has gone to the fronts and to the countryside, and where there remains a disproportionally large number of intellectuals without a place in life and without jobs, who *spectally besiege* you. Counsels to go away you stubbornly reject" ³

Lenin's warnings and closer association with the new Soviet reality had a decisive influence on Gorky and brought

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 23, p. 334.

² "The Social Revolution and Maxim Gorky", *Pravda*, January 20, 1918.

³ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 35, p. 412.

him nearer to a more correct understanding of the substance of the events of the revolution. From July 1918 Gorky ceased to contribute to *Novaya Zhizn*. He was shattered by the dastardly attempt on Lenin's life by the S R woman Kaplan. This fact forced him to realise the sternness of the class struggle which was going on, to see more clearly the real countenance of the Mensheviks and S R's to reconsider his one-sided views of the intelligentsia. Many years later Gorky recalled "From the year 1918 from the day of the infamous attempt on the life of Vladimir Il'vich I again felt myself a 'Bolshevik'".¹ Subsequently recalling his temporary "differences" with Lenin Gorky wrote "The significance of these 'differences' in my view was quite profound. He the theoretician, proved to be immeasurably more deeply and better acquainted with Russian reality. It seems to me contradictions result not only from power of cognising reason and the unshakeable correctness of theory, but from something else too, besides that. This 'something else' may be the elevation of the point of observation which is possible only thanks to a rare ability to consider the present from the point of view of the future. And I think that precisely this elevation and this ability ought to be the basis of the 'socialist realism' that people are beginning to talk about here as of something new and necessary for our literature".²

Lenin not only gave the most principled assessment of Gorky's work he almost promoted the appearance of some of his outstanding writings. For example the idea of Gorky's autobiographical trilogy (*Childhood My Apprenticeship My Universities*) came to the author during a conversation with Lenin on Capri. During that time Gorky told Lenin a lot about his childhood, his father, his grandmother Akulina Ivanovna, his wanderings in his youth about Nizhny Novgorod and about the Volga. Lenin listened with great attention to his brilliant narrations and advised him to write about all that. "It is wrong for you to divide your experience up into small stories it is time for you to put it all in one book, in some big novel".³ Lenin's advice

¹ V I Lenin and A M Gorky *Letters Reminiscences Documents*, p. 295 (in Russian)

² M Gorky *Collected Works* Vol. 30 pp. 301-02 (in Russian)

³ V I Lenin and A M Gorky *Letters Reminiscences, Documents* p. 278 (in Russian)

was accepted by the writer. It was Lenin too who advised Gorky to write about Lev Tolstoi. Subsequently Gorky produced a remarkable essay about the great writer. In this work one feels clearly all that Gorky's attitude to L. Tolstoi had in common with Lenin's views on the figure, world outlook and work of that great artist.

When, before the revolution, Gorky conceived the idea of writing, as it were, a short literary history of Russian capitalism, taking as a model three generations of one family, Lenin recommended that he should set to work on this plan after the revolution. "An excellent subject," Lenin said, "of course it is difficult, it will require heaps of time, I think, for you to cope with it, but I don't see what you will end it with. There is no end to it in reality. No, that must be written after the revolution."¹ Gorky followed Lenin's advice and wrote the work he had planned, *The Artamonovs*, after the October Revolution, when the actual course of historical events provided an ending based on life and therefore more convincing!

An attentive study of Lenin's correspondence with Maxim Gorky promotes the fruitful solution of many sharp questions concerning the development of contemporary literature. One of these is the question of the assertive and critical principle in the art of socialist realism. Here we must single out Lenin's attitude of approval to the life-asserting pathos of Gorky's work, his unceasing struggle against decadents, pessimists and renegades. Very indicative in this sense is the unity of Lenin and Gorky in their categorical rejection of all forms of decadence. Gorky's work manifested most clearly his life-asserting force in picturing the awakening of the masses of ordinary working people and their transformation into conscious builders of a new life.

Gorky told in the spirit of Lenin and with tremendous force about the destruction of the old, capitalist, world and the birth of the new, socialist one. This was the basic theme of the great artist's work. The immense force with which Gorky pitilessly exposed capitalism and asserted socialism in his work gave it its lofty inspiration and significance. Gorky's militant traditions are being continued and developed by Soviet writers.

¹ Ibid.

VIII

LENIN AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOVIET LITERATURE

CLOSER TO LIFE

Lenin called on writers to be "closer to life", he advised them to be in the very thick of the masses' life, to learn from the masses he pointed out where they should look for their principal hero in the fields, factories, in the army, the people's institutions. In all that Lenin said on questions of literature we hear this call to study with depth and persistence and to reproduce with truthfulness the life of the people building communism. In 1918, he wrote in *Pravda*

"We do very little to educate the people by living concrete examples and models taken from all spheres of life, although that is the task of the press during the transition from capitalism to communism. We give little attention to that aspect of *everyday* life inside the factories, in the villages and in the regiments where, more than anywhere else, the new is being built..

"Less political ballyhoo. Fewer highbrow discussions. Closer to the people. More attention to the way in which the workers and peasants are *actually* building the new in their everyday work." Literature and art were faced with new and enormous tasks, first and foremost that of embodying the image and the activity of the new man who had grown in the fire of battles for the socialist revolution.

Classics of revolutionary criticism of the past century saw the main process of the development of progressive literature, the source of its cognitive and artistic achieve-

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 28, p. 98.

ments in bringing literature closer to reality, to the people. In the Soviet epoch, the strengthening of the mutual link between art and the people's life became a conscious policy springing from the very nature of socialist society. The activity and self-awareness of the popular masses is indeed the main material of Soviet literature. The working man appears in its works as the creator of history. Lenin attached primary importance to this qualitatively new feature of Soviet literature.

In the light of the assertion of truthful popular art born of life itself and expressing its revolutionary forward movement, Lenin's opinions on the works of A. Serafimovich, A. Todorsky's *A Year with the Gun and the Plough*, V. Zazubrin's *Two Worlds*, V. Mayakovsky's and D. Bedny's agitational verses are of fundamental significance.

Writing to A. Serafimovich on May 21, 1920, Lenin highly appraised this writer's literary and social activity, his use of literature as a weapon in the Civil War and the building of the new life. Lenin wrote about his "profound sympathy" for the works and the personality of Serafimovich, of how needed was his work.

Lenin's preoccupation with the real processes of life helped the young Soviet literature to find its bearings in the complex contradictions of the new reality, in the multitude of all kinds of artistic phenomena, groupings, declarations and claims. Lenin supported works which truthfully conveyed the features of life's revolutionary transformation.

All Lenin's works are permeated with revolutionary assertion of the socialist transformation of life. The winged expression "shoots of the new"—shoots which Lenin wanted to see fostered and developed by all means—has a profound meaning, moral as well as historical and philosophical. Nadezhda Krupskaya related in one of her articles how this figurative definition of the development of the new in life occurred to Lenin.

"Lev Tolstoi has a remarkable description of spring in the woods in *Anna Karenina*. The very first shoots of grass are appearing and Levin is standing there with his gun on the way to the hunt, when a dry leaf moves, pushed by a young shoot of grass breaking through. One day Ilyich and I were talking about this leaf in Tolstoi, after which

Lenin repeatedly used the expression 'the shoots of new life' ¹

The picture brushed by Tolstoi of the irrepressible triumph of life overcoming all cruel forces in its cycle is a symbolical generalisation. The artistic image of nature's springtime awakening was transformed with Lenin into the well-known expression about the shoots of the new in man's existence and became a poetic definition of social and spiritual progress effected by the minds and efforts of millions of working people.

Artistic assimilation of the new reality and the blazing of unexplored paths of creative art has always constituted a highly complex process. The writer's subjective striving towards the Revolution by no means always coincided at that time with the real content of his work. This was accounted for to a large extent by the variety of literary phenomena of the epoch, the sharpness and wide ramification of controversy among writers. The essence of the basic problem which agitated artists of all trends in the early twenties was correctly expressed in a letter written by a group of writers to the CC of the RCP(B) in 1924. The writer's talent and its correspondence to the epoch, the letter says, are the two basic conditions for successful work. To bring the writer's talent in correspondence with the revolutionary epoch was the principal process typical of the artistic destiny of the majority of older writers. The ways for achieving this correspondence between the writer's creative personality and the period were often highly individual.

The concise figurative formula "closer to life" expresses the basic principle of the progressive writer's link with reality.

There was a number of substantial reasons for the insistence with which Lenin guided the young Soviet literature on to the path of artistic assimilation of reality as it actually was, with its conflicts and distinctive features. One of these reasons was the upsurge, after the October Socialist Revolution, in the creative activity of the popular masses, their general striving towards artistic self-expression. This process had its weak as well as its strong aspects. The overwhelming majority of new writers were lacking in general and poetic culture, and this prevented them from showing

¹ *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, May 11, 1933.

the new reality in all its fulness, led to imitation of other writers, to the use of hackneyed and stereotyped phrases

Lenin kept a constant watch on the stream of literary works, which, though full of revolutionary enthusiasm, were often weak from the ideological and professional points of view, and he pointed to the most fruitful line of work the path of artistic penetration into genuine life and the mastering of the achievements of classical artistic culture

A feature of Lenin's appraisals of the phenomena of artistic life in the period following the October Revolution is their historical aspect Lenin determined precisely the concrete historical features of the assertion of the new in all spheres of spiritual life, and made allowance for the appearance, under certain conditions, for a conflict between reality and abstract striving for something new

Lenin's characterisation of the historically conditioned contradictions between the objective process of the assertion of the new and the abstract striving towards the new is essential for understanding a number of complex phenomena in the young Soviet literature Lenin noted that these contradictions were natural in the time immediately following the Revolution but that they became unacceptable and hindered the general forward development of socialist culture later and in other conditions

At a definite historical stage, Lenin affirmed, this contradiction was understandable and legitimate, since "really great revolutions grow out of the contradictions between the old, between what is directed towards developing the old and the very abstract striving for the new, which must be so new as not to contain the tiniest particle of the old.

"And the more abrupt the revolution, the longer will many of these contradictions last ¹

According to Lenin's views, it was necessary to take a careful and sober account of the features of the evolution of those writers who at least in the main lines understood the real meaning of the great upheaval which had taken place All possible co-operation was to be given to these writers so that they could deepen their notions of the real, complicated paths along which the Revolution was developing But limitation to a mere general, sometimes emo-

¹ V I Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 497

tional perception of the Revolution gave rise in art to abstract notions of the upheaval which had taken place, notions which did not allow a correct comprehension of the complex historical processes of the period

Lenin had a good feeling and great love for really revolutionary romanticism. On the other hand, he rejected all forms of false romanticism which diverted attention from genuine life, even though it might be embellished with revolutionary phraseology. Of exceptional interest in this respect is Lenin's conversation with Gorky in 1919 on the development of revolutionary art, which we quoted above.

The romantic enthusiasm of the young Soviet literature in the early post Revolution years by no means reproduced in full the stormily developing new reality. This reality found expression mainly in the aspect of general revolutionary emotional perception, but without any concrete features, any representation of the real historical processes and changes which were penetrating all the pores of life. Moreover, the romantic reproduction of the Revolution was highly heterogeneous and differentiated. While some writers tried to express emotionally the heroic striving of the Revolution, there were others who became captive to abstract rhetorical phraseology or who, under the pretext of innovation, resorted to formalistic tricks. Pseudo-romanticism became a barrier between art and life.

Lenin's criticism of literature secluded in itself and hedged off from life helped the young Soviet literature to find the correct path. Lenin counterposed to abstract rhetoric and to the pseudo-revolutionary phraseology of the Leftist groups those works which conveyed the features of the country's mighty revolutionary transformation, the truth of the Soviet people's genuine life in concretely historical terms.

Artistic assimilation of the new, revolutionary reality was a very complex task whose fulfilment in the various historical periods had distinctive features. It is a generally accepted practice to characterise the Soviet literature of the early post Revolution years as the domination of the emotional and lyrical, cosmic and romantic perception of the Revolution. It would be wrong to deny in any measure the vital roots of such a perception. It contained great sincere enthusiasm and heroic striving for the grandeur of

the Revolution. But this did not preclude a sharp struggle in the field of literature, contradictions between a number of phenomena which begot various and sometimes opposite kinds of romanticism in different writers.

The dissimilarity between the various writers' understanding of revolutionary romanticism can be graphically seen by comparing the utterances on this subject of poets who had formerly belonged to the same trend, that of symbolism. Alexander Blok and Andrei Bely. For Blok, romanticism was a new form of feeling, a new means of assimilating life. "From this," Blok states in his article "On Romanticism", "it follows that genuine romanticism was not divorced from life, it was, on the contrary, filled with an eager striving towards life, which opened up before it in the light of a new and profound feeling."¹

For Bely, romanticism was one of the forms of abstraction of historic reality by means of its mystification, its dissolution in abstract symbolical ideas and phrases. That is why for him the "true revolutionaries were Ibsen, and Stirner, and Nietzsche, but by no means Engels or Marx."

The essence of the Revolution, its creation of new forms of life, according to Bely, lies not in the real historical upheaval accomplished in October 1917 by the workers and peasants, but in the movement of "eternally existing" primary predestinations and the mystical movement of life.

"And it is clear to us that the forms of social life lying in the future and realised by the Revolution, properly speaking are not at all forms of some kind of *Bolshevist* culture but something *eternally existing*, hidden under the formal veil of the arts."²

For all the contradiction in Blok's perception of the world, in his "The Twelve" we hear echoes of the real tread of the Revolution. Andrei Bely's poem "Christ is Risen" (1918) seems to resemble Blok's poem outwardly. However, it contains no genuine features of the Revolution, but only its shadow, distorted beyond recognition, a literary transformation of the author's mystical outlook.

Finally, many writers, unable to keep up with the move-

¹ Alexander Blok, *Collected Works*, Vol. 12, Moscow, 1936, p. 196 (in Russian).

² Andrei Bely, *Revolution and Culture* Moscow, 1917, p. 25' (in Russian).

ment of history, could not discern the genuine romanticism of labour and indulged in pseudo romantic regrets and sighs for the time, irrecoverably receded into the past, of gallant cavalry attacks brandished sabres and such like.

When we speak of the planetary cosmic character of romanticism of a number of the first works of the young Soviet literature we must make it clear that there are different kinds of cosmism and different kinds of romanticism. Cosmic romanticism in the work of a number of writers in the years immediately following the Revolution was largely associated with the outdated canons of pre-revolutionary decadent aesthetics which made abstractions of events, thus often producing false ideas of reality. This was precisely what caused many poets of the cosmic and emotional romantic and mostly ultra Left trend to lose the orientation in the difficult NEP years.

It was precisely abstraction from the concrete historical character of the Revolution, breaking of the contacts with life that gave rise to the pseudo romantic rejection of the NEP on the part of some poets connected with the Prolet kult and Futurist groups. Lenin justly drew attention to the falsity of the disgruntled emotionality of poets who lost courage when it came to real struggle, panicked because they could not see the genuine heroics of the Revolution beyond their artificial backward conceptions. Lenin insistently urged artists to recreate the concrete dynamism of existing reality, the living practice of revolutionary building of socialism. All subsequent experience confirmed the correctness of this main line in developing Soviet literature.

Lenin's rejection of "political ballyhoo", general arguments and "abstract slogans" was particularly insistent in the field of culture, public education in the widest sense of the term, including literature and art. This thought was developed in detail in the article "On the Work of the People's Commissariat for Education" in 1921. Lenin rejected a one-sided approach to the processes of the revolutionary epoch, to the building of a new life. Lenin associated the political ballyhoo, the juggling with general formulas with the "abstract slogans" indulged in by inexperienced Communists who do not understand their tasks.

Indulgence in "abstract slogans" was typical of some sections of writers who had not been able to make the tran-

sition from the abstraction of general romantic enthusiasm of the revolution to its real processes and difficulties to the concrete historical work of building a new world. On this soil a complex dramatic conflict arose in their consciousness between the general revolutionary striving of their work and the "prose" of the new socialist society.

An abstract speculative approach to the processes of the revolution and the building of socialism entails very deplorable results.

Indulging in revolutionary phraseology in the conditions of the masses' exceptionally difficult life and of the severe life-and-death struggle waged by the Soviet Republic frequently became a form of abstraction of reality and hindered genuine understanding of the complex questions of life.

Life always turns out to be much more complex and difficult than it seems to one taking a one-way approach to the processes of society's progressive development. It was precisely this antithesis between all abstract revolutionary spirit which does not take into account the real course of history and the revolutionary character of the living demands of the new life that Lenin stressed when he warned against the objective impotence of vacillating "pure (i.e., abstract) communism i.e., communism that has not yet matured to the stage of practical political action by the masses".¹

The immaturity, abstractness of revolutionary spirit which, by the way, is nearly always outwardly ultra-Left, is most tangibly revealed in periods of difficulties, trials, sharpening of historical contradictions in the process of socialism's development.

The one-sided, festive and triumphal approach to the Revolution had to enter and did enter in time into contradiction with the real course of life and became transformed into abstract rhetoric. Lenin warned writers against a narrow outwardly revolutionary word-slinging approach to the Revolution which, against the background of the famine, economic chaos, privations and losses from the war that the country was going through, became lifeless stereotype declamation. In this connection Lenin said at the Seventh Congress of the RCP(B) in March 1918:

¹ V. I. Lenin *Collected Works*, Vol. 31 pp. 94-95.

"From the period of the triumphal march we had to pass to a period in which we were in an extraordinarily difficult and painful situation, one which certainly could not be brushed aside with words, with brilliant slogans, however pleasant that would have been"¹

The limitation of the "festive", "word-slinging" perception of reality, for all the fascination of its revolutionary romantic fervour did not provide the possibility to understand correctly the genuine complexity of historical development. Naturally enough, therefore, the majority of cosmist poets proved unable to understand correctly and courageously the stern contradictions and trials of history, the genuine dialectics of the course of events. The issues of the journal *Kuznets* (Blacksmith) (1921, Nos 8-9) at the period of the turn to the NEP were distinguished by sombre funereal moods. S. Alexandrovsky's poem "The Heavy Paw of Melancholy", M. Gerasimov's "Black Song" and V. Kirillov's "My Funeral" were monotonous variations of the same themes of melancholy and despair, of the irrevocable passing away of the romanticism of revolution. These moods exerted a temporary influence even on such poets as Demyan Bedny, who reacted to the introduction of the NEP with works permeated with gloom and pessimism.

To the abstract "word slinging" approach to the questions of the revolution V. I. Lenin counterposed the task of positive, practical building of a new life, the necessity "to foster the simple, modest, ordinary but viable shoots of genuine communism"²

Lenin's insistence on the links between literature and life has nothing in common with a barren apologia of the "literature of fact". The history of literature has already revealed convincingly enough the untenability of this conception, its anti-realistic, hackwork character.

Literature and publicistic writings which pick on the mere outward accidental features of life were compared by Lenin to an observer who enumerates "separate trees" and does not see "the forest". Lenin considered it essential to keep true facts apart from "minor facts" and to study them in their interconnection. "Facts, if we take them in their entirety, in their interconnection are not only stubborn

¹ V. I. Lenin *Collected Works*, Vol 27, p 94

² *Ibid*, Vol 29, p 428

things, but undoubtedly proof bearing things. Minor facts, if taken out of their entirety, out of their interconnection, if they are arbitrarily selected and torn out of context, are merely things for juggling, or even worse ¹ Conclusions and generalisations built on the basis of "minor facts" arbitrarily taken out of their interconnection were called by Lenin "subjective concoctions"

This subjective replacement of facts with "minor facts" in literature leads to naturalism

The study of life, in Lenin's opinion presupposes widely embracing and deeply understanding facts of various kinds. And this necessarily demands profound perception of a multitude of phenomena in their aggregate, in their contradictions, interconnections and interactions the elucidation of their place and role in the general stream of social life. Genuine art consists in discerning and portraying the complex interconnections of separate persons with the broad vital processes at work during the historical development of reality.

Alongside the social, agitational, romantic, satirical, everyday and lyrical works, Lenin was deeply appreciative of works of great philosophical and historical content, dealing, as Gorky put it, with the basic questions of the soul. Lenin gave a positive appraisal of A. V. Lunacharsky's first play, *The Royal Barber*.

The rich philosophical content, the acuity of historical thought in Lunacharsky's play, the first in his cycle of philosophico-historical dramas *The Magi*, *Oliver Cromwell*, *The Deliverance of Don Quixote* met with Lenin's approval. In a letter to the producer Kel, who staged this play (Kursk Drama Theatre, 1925), Lunacharsky refers to Lenin's opinion: "The play has its shortcomings. But I can say with pride that it was given a sufficiently flattering though oral, assessment by a man as sparing of praise as our great leader, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. He, of course, noted in the play what for me is the most important thing: the attempt, on the one hand, to analyse what monarchy is, on what social contradictions it grows, and, on the other hand, to show its natural perversion, monstrous ambition passing directly into a kind of madness."

¹ Ibid., Vol. 23, p. 72

"No few mad tyrants like my Dogober have sat on thrones generally, and on the Russian throne in particular I purposely let this tyrant die at the hands of his closest minion Byron once formulated the thought Autocracy is power limited by the knife of a court assassin Brought up at Dogober's feet and perversely sated with the reflection of his ambition, the royal barber feels satanically proud for an instant for he is the destroyer of this greatness which has always seemed so dazzling to him And yet he himself is only a worthless man trembling at every rustle heralding his possible destruction Thus all the pride of power is reduced to nought"¹

The Royal Barber gave an interesting revolutionary treatment of urgent social questions of its time This line in Lunacharsky's work found its most fruitful continuation in the drama *Tommaso Campanella* (1920) Here culture of philosophico-historical thought is combined with talented portrayal of the image of one of the greatest utopian writers of the past

The figure and activity of the great utopian Campanella was naturally associated with the problem of the future of mankind, with the socialist dream

But in a number of Lunacharsky's works the striving to treat the problems of the past and of the present in a broad generalising manner turned into speculative abstraction These weak aspects were most evident in the dramatic fantasy *The Magi* (1919) According to F Volgin Lenin mentioned Lunacharsky's plays in a conversation about the theatre with a Proletkult delegation and related half-joking how he had read *The Magi* "In the foreword it says that the play was written at night time during a journey along the front and that it will probably be a source of great pleasure I began to read it, and on the fifth page I fell asleep"²

The rationalistic character of the play's plot and its rationalistic abstractness are explained in the foreword by the author, as an attempt to develop in images the idea of "panpsychic monism" The author makes the reservation that he did not dare to advance this thought as a theoretical thesis since he considers that in life one can rely only

¹ *Kurskaya Pravda* April 28 1960

² *V I Lenin on Literature and Art* p 699 (in Russian)

on the data of science, whereas any hypothesis may be propounded in fiction. No doubt artistic creation gives more scope for imagination than science. But the speculative nature of the hypothesis on which the play is based, the rationality of its literary embodiment stifled the dynamism of thought, its living social and human content.

The plot of Lunacharsky's play *The Deliverance of Don Quixote* (1922) is linked with his immediate impressions of meetings with Lenin and the realistic perspicacity of Lenin's analysis of the complex contradictions in the consciousness of the intelligentsia in the transitory revolutionary period.

"The idea of contemporary Don Quixotism," Lunacharsky related, "occurred to me with particular vividness when I was present at a conversation between Vladimir Ilyich Lenin and Maxim Gorky."¹ In this conversation Lenin spoke of the fine, kindly people of the Petrograd intelligentsia, whose sympathy was "always for the oppressed" and who were "always against persecution. Hence they were prepared to help even counter revolutionaries, if they were persecuted by the revolutionary organs and thus to disarm the Revolution in the name of abstractly understood kindness."

The problem of "Don Quixotism" in modern times emerged and acquired specific meaning in the conditions of the fierce class struggle which accompanied the development of the socialist Revolution. The very term "Don Quixotism" then became a kind of synonym for the striving of representatives of abstract humanism to rise above the struggle of the two main social forces for the positions of artists who rejected the moral foundations of bourgeois society and at the same time opposed the necessity for firmness in asserting the Revolution. Lunacharsky saw Gorky, Rolland and Korolenko as modern Don Quixotes, modern idealists, who, owing to the abstractness of their humanistic outlook, inevitably came to clash with the inevitable reality of the Revolution.

Korolenko, too, was a "fine kind" man, but far removed from the logic of the Revolution, and he condemned all use of force.

¹ A. V. Lunacharsky *In the West* (Moscow, 1927) pp. 84-85 (in Russian).

Lenin took an interest in Korolenko before and after the Revolution. Congenial to Lenin was the realism of Korolenko's works, the truthfulness to life of his *Pavlov's Sketches*. In his "Draft for a Speech on the Agrarian Question in the Second State Duma" (1905) he called Korolenko a "progressive writer". The fate and the position of this writer, one of the most outstanding and respected representatives of the Russian humanist intelligentsia, interested Lenin in the post-revolutionary period, too, though he was extremely busy with matters of Soviet and Party work.

Nevertheless, Lenin always noted the contradictions in Korolenko's outlook, differentiated between his strong and his weak points, never agreeing with the impersonal, vague characterisations of him given in the Narodist and Socialist-Revolutionary press.

The spiritual crisis of society in the epoch of imperialism, especially in the period of sharp aggravation of its contradictions, finds expression, alongside the intensification of open anti-popular reactionary tendencies and calls to barbarism, also in the wide spread of various illusions in subjectively humanistic intellectual circles. Many of these wishful illusions, in the conditions of the social reality at the time, especially during the period of decisive historical break-ups, prove deceptive and enter into conflict with progressive revolutionary forces. History contains many dramatic biographies of subjectively honest and humanistic writers who, despite their love of Mankind, did not understand the objective course of history, writers who entered into contradiction with the stern reality of the socialist revolution. In Korolenko's attitude to the crucial events of the period, the limitedness of humanism in abstraction from the genuine course of history was particularly clearly demonstrated.

The best known and most precise attitude to Korolenko's position at the time was formulated by Lenin in the above-quoted letter to Gorky of September 15, 1919. It is of particular significance in elucidating Lenin's attitude to Gorky and Korolenko, as well as to the moods prevalent among the intelligentsia in the years following the October Revolution. As we said above, this letter was an answer to Gorky's complaint about the allegedly unjustified arrests of certain representatives of the intelligentsia close to the Cadets.

"Reading your frank opinion on this matter" Lenin wrote "I recall a remark of yours, which sank into my mind during our talks (in London on Capri and afterwards)

"We artists are irresponsible people

"Exactly! You utter incredibly angry words about what? About a few dozen (or perhaps even a few hundred) Cadet and near-Cadet gentry spending a few days in jail in order to prevent plots like that of the surrender of Krasnaya Gorka plots which threaten the lives of tens of thousands of workers and peasants.

"A calamity indeed! What injustice! A few days, or even weeks, in jail for intellectuals in order to prevent the massacre of tens of thousands of workers and peasants!

"Artists are irresponsible people!

"It is wrong to confuse the intellectual forces of the people with the 'forces of bourgeois intellectuals. As a sample of the latter I take Korolenko. I recently read the pamphlet *War the Fatherland and Mankind*, which he wrote in August 1914. Mind you Korolenko is the best of the near-Cadets, almost a Menshevik. But what a disgusting, base, vile defence of imperialist war concealed behind honeyed phrases! For such gentlemen 10 000 000 killed in one imperialist war is a deed worthy of support (by deeds, accompanied by honeyed phrases against war), but the death of hundreds of thousands in a just civil war against the landowners and capitalists evokes ahs and ohs, sighs, and hysterics."¹

While condemning Korolenko's position in the stern years of the Revolution Lenin nevertheless saw the evolution and the contradictions in his work.

Korolenko's pamphlet had a subtitle "Letters on Questions of Our Time." The main questions of the time to which the writer wanted to give an answer were questions of the Revolution, the Motherland and the imperialist war. Not understanding the Bolsheviks' revolutionary interpretation of the question of the Motherland, V. G. Korolenko came out against the idea of transforming the imperialist war into a civil war. In the introductory chapter the author sets forth the motives which induced him to write the pamphlet, he refers to "certain people" who said there was no need for a Motherland, that love for it was a harmful feeling

¹ V. I. Lenin *Collected Works*, Vol. 44, p. 284.

of which one should rid oneself as of a prejudice, that one should act as though there were no native country at all. From such perverse conceptions the writer draws the conclusion that the feeling of the Motherland was almost dying in revolutionary Russia and characterises this as a shameful, fatal error—a great sin against one's Motherland. The writer regards the refusal to continue the imperialist war in the spirit of chauvinist conceptions discerning in it the beginning of the Motherland's destruction. The pamphlet ends with the conclusion: By renouncing the great unions already achieved by Mankind we are going not forward but backward from unity to disintegration. On this path another monster lies in wait for us designated by yet another foreign word, with which Russia will also to her misfortune have to make acquaintance.

This word is anarchy.

"Its ~~literal~~ meaning is absence of authority. It is the loss by a country of that leading centre uniting the will of the whole people and giving harmony and living unity to all the separate strivings. It only has to disappear for ever: the destructive thought only has to assert itself that the Motherland is not needed; that it is not the affair of the whole people, but only the affair of some class or other; and the life of the whole country will be turned back. Instead of the difficult and great work of creating a new life, simple disintegration will set in."¹

Lenin knew well and appreciated the humanistic content of Korolenko's previous work. But when the writer erroneously came out against the basic principles of the programme for developing the socialist revolution, transforming the imperialist war into a civil one, Lenin gave an exact objective definition of those views. In calling Korolenko an intellectual 'near-Cadet', Lenin had in mind the real meaning of his social position in 1917-1920. The writer was objectively repeating the ideas which Cadet propaganda put forward at the time in defence of continuing the imperialist war.

In September 1922 Lenin looked through and commented in the margin of the booklets *Korolenko Petersburg Collection* edited by A. B. Petrishchev (Mysl Publishers,

¹ V. G. Korolenko *War, Fatherland and Mankind* Moscow 1917 pp. 47-48 (in Russian).

Petrograd 1922) *V Korolenko in His Letters 1883 1921* (Zadruga Publishers, 1922), and *Letters of V G Korolenko to I P Belokonsky*. His critical remarks were called forth by the statement in the foreword to the last book to the effect that as a result of reading these letters one would get a more precise and clear idea of 'the life, work and the whole spiritual countenance of a humanist writer of our day, a writer who, in the last years of his life was proclaimed the conscience of Russian society by the unanimous voice of the literature of his country! Lenin underlined the words "humanist writer" and "conscience of Russian society" and wrote "What about his pamphlet in favour of the war in 1917?"¹

Korolenko's historical "Don Quixotism" was clearly revealed in the period of decisive revolutionary battles. The writer did not understand the justice and necessity of mercilessly repressing counter revolution and the attempts of the ruling classes to turn back the wheel of history. The humanism of his subjective motives did not coincide with the objective logic of the movement of life. Nevertheless, while criticising Korolenko's views, Lenin took account of the complexity of the spiritual processes at work among the old progressive intelligentsia, the difficulty they had in renouncing the historically shaped prejudices and their habitual seraphic illusions. And this accounted for Lenin's highly careful attitude to the old intelligentsia's sincere seekings for the truth.

Solicitude for the writer permeated Lenin's note to the People's Commissar for Health V Semashko asking him to "appoint a special person (preferably a *well known physician with knowledge of and known in foreign countries*)"² to accompany a group of outstanding Soviet figures and V G Korolenko going to Germany for medical treatment. Already seriously ill, Lenin himself in Gorki selected from a parcel of books that had arrived from the city a volume of Gorky and requested N K Krupskaya to read to him Gorky's article about Korolenko.

It is quite natural that the example of Korolenko and the dramatic fate of many other representatives of the intelligentsia in the highly complex period of fierce armed

¹ *Oktyabr* No 4 1964 p 16

² *Lenin Miscellany XX* p 353 (in Russian)

struggle of the classes aroused in Lunacharsky the desire to respond to the undying theme of "Don Quixotism" in the light of the problems of the revolutionary time. In the play *Deliverance of Don Quixote* we find an interesting philosophical interpretation of social "Don Quixotism", typical of fairly broad circles of the old intelligentsia, of the conflict of abstract subjective humanism and the real course of history. And the actuality of this drama lies in the measure of its closeness to the living demands of the spiritual life of the time, in the degree in which the rationalistic abstraction inherent in the majority of Lunacharsky's works is overcome in it.

Let us note in passing that the theme "Lenin and Lunacharsky" has not yet been thoroughly studied. An enormous mass of historical materials, documents and correspondence is still waiting to be "taken up" and dealt with. They are of great historical interest. The destiny and the person of Lunacharsky, an outstanding figure of revolutionary socialist culture, were wholly determined by Lenin's general ideas and personal influence. Lunacharsky's life as a writer was inseparably associated with Lenin, who constantly steered him, prone as he was to go off into the sphere of philosophico-aesthetic abstraction, towards concrete historical life, which gave his versatile and sensitive talent a true and fruitful direction.

* * *

The formation of Soviet literature was a complex process full of sharp contradictions. Immediately after the Great October Socialist Revolution and in the early twenties there existed numerous trends and groups reflecting in an original and sometimes fantastic form the complexity of the class battles being waged. Reactionary, openly bourgeois anti-Soviet elements dreaming of the restoration of capitalism also made themselves felt. Pseudo-innovators, Futurists and the like, who had penetrated into the Proletkult groups and claimed the leadership in art, also noisily drew attention to themselves. At the same time young but quickly consolidating groups of artists were brought to the fore by the revolutionary epoch. Directing the development of Soviet literature, the Party under Lenin's leadership headed the struggle against all and sundry hostile moods and groups.

of artists, against formalistic, naturalistic and other alien trends. On the other hand, Lenin carried out colossal work to draw old members of the artistic professions into the building of revolutionary culture and rear new young creative forces.

Lenin had but anger and scorn for those men of letters who placed themselves at the service of the old classes, time and again he noted their animal hatred for the Soviet people. They indulged in gloomy incantations about the downfall of culture in the Soviet country and described the so-called atrocities of the Bolsheviks, endeavouring by all means to justify the heinous crimes of the counter-revolutionary troops and authorities.

In his report on the internal and external situation of the republic at the Moscow Conference of the RCP(B) on July 12, 1919, Lenin, having described the countless calamities which Kolchak had brought on the people by destroying everything in his path when retreating, wrathfully branded the bourgeois writers' lies. "To speak of Bolshevik atrocities in face of these facts requires all the hypocrisy of bourgeois writers."¹

"Lackeys of the bourgeoisie" was how Lenin qualified the company of writers who contributed to various white-guard and emigré publications. Characterising white-guard literature in 1920, Lenin said that the writings of "Russian intellectuals like Chirikov, or of bourgeois thinkers like Y. E. Trubetskoi" were helping Denikin by their arguments and in themselves "proved that Soviet rule is backed by sincere revolutionaries who sympathise with the struggle against the capitalists. That has been made perfectly clear during the Civil War."²

In some books and articles on the history of literature, written mostly by literary critics abroad, the artistic life in Soviet Russia in the twenties is represented in an extremely one-sided fashion. This period is counterposed to all the subsequent periods in the history of Soviet literature as allegedly differing by fuller creative flowering of various trends and organisations.

Indeed, the first years of the NEP were distinguished by an abundance of various kinds of literary groups, private

¹ V. I. Lenin *Collected Works*, Vol. 29, p. 490.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 30, pp. 421-22.

publishing houses putting out many books ideologically alien to Soviet literature and not unfrequently of the gutter type

In the first NEP years there was lively activity of private publishing houses 233 of them on June 1 1923 The reader was offered mainly "fashionable translated works, for instance the works of foreign decadents of the idealist philosophers O Spengler, Radlov, Lossky, Gershenson, Freud entertaining literature such as the works of Burroughs The flow of anti Soviet literature increased

The Party and Lenin never proposed to allow things to take their own course in the field of literature and art In setting the task of overcoming the resistance of the capitalists in the ideological as well as the military, economic and political spheres, Lenin described it as "the most profound and most powerful Under his leadership a number of measures were taken to intensify the influence of socialist ideas in literature and art and ensure state control over publishing in the country On February 6 1922 Lenin gave instructions to "check on the basis of what laws and rules more than 143 private publishing houses were registered in Moscow as *Izvestia* of February 5 reported, who were the members of the administrative and editorial staffs responsible for each of them, what was their civil responsibility and also their responsibility before the courts in general who was in charge of this matter in the State Publishing Department, who was responsible for it ¹

Lenin was keen in noting the various manifestations of the historical conflict dividing the fate of the different sections of the intelligentsia He counterposed to the white-guard literature put out by Kolchak and Denikin the writings of authors who sincerely strove to find out the genuine truth of the Revolution

Even before the Revolution Lenin foresaw with amazingly accurate and perspicacious critical thought the subsequent path of a number of writers The period of socialist revolution and civil war witnessed the final formations of the political countenance of many writers revealing with extreme clarity the nature of their social stand This evolution had a most urgent meaning in respect of authors who had previously been close to the Socialist Revolutionary Party, the

¹ *Lenin Miscellany XXXV* p 321 (in Russian)

Mensheviks and the anarchists Already in the early twenties Lenin returned in particular, to a characterisation of the position of V Ropshin the author of the renegade pessimistic novels *The Pale Horse*, and *What There Was Not*

The anti Bolshevik outlook of V Ropshin and other representatives of the Socialist Revolutionary Party naturally led them to close association with international reaction and to direct participation in conspiracies and mutinies against the Soviet system In a 'Note to the Politbureau of the CC RCP(B)', Lenin suggested to hasten "the publication in all European languages of Savinkov's pamphlet *Fighting the Bolsheviks*¹ as that pamphlet proved the real link of the S-Rs with international reaction

Despite all sorts of fashionable reputations Lenin always defined precisely the real class meaning of this or that book

The close attention paid by Lenin to the political stand of writers and literary critics was particularly timely in the conditions of sharpening social and ideological struggle It was typical that in the first years of the Revolution many authors went far beyond the framework of the problems of fiction in their publicistic writings, taking a direct part in political polemics and setting forth their social views Among the objects of Lenin's attention was a number of books and articles of this sort which clearly revealed the political differentiation of the moods of various groups of intellectuals

This is borne out, for instance by the number of passages underlined by Lenin in Y Aikhenvald's book *Our Revolution Its Leaders and the Led* (Moscow, Revolution and Culture Publishers 1918)

Aikhenvald was fairly outspoken in his hostility to the Revolution in respect of the basic political problems In particular his book contains such chapters as "On the Bolsheviks", "On Russia's Suicide", "The Hohenzollerns and Trotsky (Bronstein)", "The End of Revolutionary Romanticism"

Lenin's attention was also attracted by the book *Greeting to the Constitutional Assembly* which consisted of articles by Sologub, Gippius, Merezhkovsky, Filosofov and Remizov

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works* Vol 42, p 414.

The authors of this collection, voicing their hostility to the socialist revolution, did all in their power to defend the bases of the toppling old system. This quite clearly manifested the true socio-philosophical substance of the views of these writers as representatives of decadence who had formerly tried to pass as supporters of social and inner spiritual freedom.

Revealed also was the inconsistency of persistently reiterated attempts to prove that the decadent writers were free from any definite political partiality, that their work and their views were "above the parties". The true meaning of the social positions held by Merezhkovsky and Gippius, Filosofov and Remizov was brought to light in still greater relief in emigration, in their inner connection with the whiteguards and all kinds of other anti-socialist reactionary forces.

Lenin paid great attention to the various shades in the views and sentiments among the intelligentsia and always characterised them with great precision. He did not even put the *Smena Vekh* group on a level with the emigre enemies of the Revolution. The ideology of the *Smena Vekh* group was spread in the early twenties by the journals *Novaya Rossiya*, *Rossiia*, *Ekonomist*, *Ekonomicheskoye vozrozhdeniye*, and *Mysl'*, in the Russian Economic Society, the Russian Technical Society and the Petersburg Philosophical Society. The *Smena Vekh* adherents recognised the Soviets as the only legitimate power in Soviet Russia, but hoped for a bourgeois reorientation of the Soviet system. Lenin's precise assessments of their programme provide the key to deeply understanding the political meaning of the works of writers who contributed to journals of the *Novaya Rossiya* type.

A sober and at the same time cautious approach to the intelligentsia formed in bourgeois society is typical of Lenin's attitude to the writers and critics of the older generation. The resolution of the Twelfth All Russia Conference of the RCP(B) "On Anti-Soviet Parties and Trends" (1922) says "It is more than ever necessary at the present time for the party organisations to display a differentiated attitude to each individual group (or even individual person) of representatives of science, technology, medicine, pedagogy, and so on and so forth. In respect of really non-Party elements among representatives of technology, sci

ence, the teaching profession, writers, poets, and so on, who understand at least in the main lines the real meaning of the great upheaval which has taken place, what is necessary is support and businesslike co operation

"The Party must do all in its power to help the crystallisation of those trends and groups which display an effective desire to help the workers and peasants state From the capital down to *uyezd* towns the Party must patiently, systematically and persistently pursue precisely this line in order to facilitate for the said elements the transition to co-operation with the Soviet power"¹

In Lenin's opinion the greatest social upheaval in the history of mankind could not take place without friction, difficulties and conflicts, without a fierce struggle Lenin dispelled all illusions on this score, noting that the workers and peasants were not infected with the sentimental illusions of Messrs the intellectuals and all the *Novaya Zhizn* and similar trash who shouted themselves hoarse against the capitalists, 'gesticulated' and 'fulminated' against them only to weep and behave like a beaten pup when it was a matter of getting down to brass tacks, and carrying out the practical business of overthrowing capitalism At the same time Lenin drew attention to the process of drawing into the Revolution the more sensitive representatives of the intelligentsia who wished to serve their country

Many big scientists, writers, engineers and artists supported the revolutionary transformations As early as December 1917 Lenin noted that "educated men are already making their appearance on the side of the people, on the side of the working people, and are helping to break the resistance of the servants of capital"²

In a letter to Gorky on July 31, 1919, Lenin mentioned the "remainder of the aristocracy who have a splendid ability to distort everything, a splendid gift for picking on every trifle to vent their frenzied hatred of Soviet power"³ At the same time Lenin noted that "*month by month* the Soviet Republic acquires a growing percentage of bourgeois intellectuals who are *sincerely* helping the

¹ *KPSS v resolyutsiyakh* Part 1 Moscow, 1953 pp 672-73 (in Russian)

² V I Lenin *Collected Works*, Vol. 26 pp 408-09

³ *Ibid*, Vol. 35, p 411

workers and peasants" ¹ In denouncing those who prophesied the universal collapse of culture, Lenin commended the best representatives of the intelligentsia who took the part of Soviet power

In a letter to the prominent electrical engineer Charles Steinmetz dated April 10, 1922, Lenin drew attention to the process of the differentiation of the intelligentsia in the revolutionary epoch, the merging of its best representatives with the movement of the popular masses

"In all the countries of the world there is growing more slowly than one would like, but irresistibly and unswervingly the number of representatives of science, technology, art, who are becoming convinced of the necessity of replacing capitalism by a different socio-economic system, and whom the terrible difficulties' of the struggle of Soviet Russia against the entire capitalist world do not repel, do not frighten away but, on the contrary, lead to an understanding of the inevitability of the struggle and the necessity of taking what part in it they can, helping the new to overcome the old"

The best writers who supported the revolution helped the new to overpower the old

The subsequent development of literature proved Lenin right many educated people did go over to the side of the people, the side of the revolution, among them the writers Mayakovsky, Bryusov, Blok, Veresayev and many others who were seeking to build a new life and a new man and searching for a way out of the profound crisis which had overtaken art in bourgeois society

His observations of the complex processes at work within the intelligentsia gave Lenin grounds for drawing the conclusion about the impressive power of the new, and the historical need for including the best representatives of the intelligentsia in the stream of revolutionary transformations Singling out the 'shoots of the new' in post Revolution reality, Lenin asserted the all-conquering power of this newness that had been introduced by the Revolution The objective revolutionary course of history, in Lenin's opinion, would exert a decisive influence on the position of the intelligentsia, differentiating it, "removing those of

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works*, Vol 35, p 411

² Ibid, pp 552-53

them (intellectuals V S) who are incorrigibly bourgeois, reforming re-educating and subordinating the waverers, and gradually winning over larger sections of them to its side ¹ These words of Lenin's from his article "A Great Beginning" testify that the going over of the old intelligentsia to the side of the Revolution was one of the logical and most important processes in the formation of the new socialist culture

THE PROLETKULT AND FUTURISM

Lenin combined looking ahead to the future and the long term nature of his descriptions and forecasts of the development of socialist culture with a penetrating, sober assessment of the concrete conditions and complexities of the present. He pointed out that the birth of the new socialist culture was an extremely complex process, fraught with contradictions, conflicts, struggle, extremes and intense searching.

Proceeding from their sectarian premises, the Proletkult theoreticians, the Futurists and the supporters of other ultra-Left groupings, tried to steer the development of the young revolutionary culture and art along false paths. This is why Lenin directed his attacks first and foremost against all ultra-Left phenomena, the scholasticism of the Proletkult, which was now being run by alien class elements, decadents who had rapidly turned their coats and unsuccessful writers who had failed to make a name for themselves.

It is perfectly understandable why the brunt of Lenin's criticism on cultural questions was directed primarily against these trends. As we know, the apparent ultra-revolutionary nature of these groups and their claims to the position of the sole representatives of proletarian art were impressing certain circles of inexperienced young people who lacked a firm standpoint. It was Lenin who first defined the true significance of these trends.

As early as 1919 Lenin spoke of those who had come originally from the bourgeois intelligentsia and were now presenting the most absurd ideas as something new, offering "the supernatural and incongruous as purely proletarian

¹ V I Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 29, p. 425

art and proletarian culture" ¹ As we know, an extraordinary number of pseudo innovators appeared in the early period of the development of Soviet literature and art. Lenin saw culture as the result of the activity of the whole people, the result of the labours of all generations of mankind. In revealing the popular roots of progressive culture, he passionately condemned the attempts of various pseudo-innovators, self-styled specialists on proletarian culture, and Leftist vulgarisers to present their fabrications as true creative achievements, to offer old decadent rubbish as revolutionary innovation.

In its letter of 1920 "On the Proletkult Organisations" the Central Committee of the Party drew attention to the large number of different groupings, the existence of conflicting trends within the artistic intelligentsia and, in particular, within the Proletkult. "The Proletkult," says the letter, "has attracted a wave of elements which are socially alien to us, petty bourgeois elements which sometimes literally take over the leadership of the Proletkult organisations. Futurists, decadents, exponents of idealist philosophy opposed to Marxism, and finally simple failures, people who have come from the ranks of bourgeois publicists and philosophers, have started in some places to run the Proletkult organisations" ²

After the Great October Revolution all manner of pseudo-innovators began to put forward their claims, declaring themselves loudly to be the sole creators of progressive revolutionary art.

Many books and articles on the history of Soviet literature depict these phenomena as the turbulent and frequently extreme expression of the liberated young revolutionary forces in art, which were brimming over and seeking an outlet. Futurism, Constructivism and Imagism are generally described as the distinctive, if not always properly directed, product of the revolutionary epoch. To this very day many historians of literature argue, in the face of historical facts, that all this was the result of youthful extremism and that it was actually a fruitful search for truth which opened up the innovatory main paths of Soviet art.

¹ V. I. Lenin *Collected Works* Vol. 29 p. 336

² *On the Party and Soviet Press*, Moscow, 1954, pp. 220-21 (in Russian)

All this may be true in respect of the individual subjective biographies of certain writers. But if one is speaking of the modernist phenomena of that period in general, their real historical roots, sources and essence have little in common with the flood of young talent and seekings begotten by the Revolution. In fact the manifestoes of the Proletkultists, Futurists and other similar groups were to a large extent simply a continuation of the programmes of pre-revolutionary trends, hastily painted red for the new situation.

The Central Committee's letter "On the Proletkult Organisations" reveals the true origin of Proletkult and Futurist theories. It exposes the superficiality of the views, which regarded the Proletkult and Futurism as the product of the revolutionary epoch. After saying that "under the guise" of proletarian culture "the workers have been offered bourgeois views and philosophies (Machism), and in the sphere of the arts the workers have been instilled with absurd, distorted tastes (Futurism)", there follows a clear description of their real theoretical and historical roots. "It is those anti-Marxist views that flourished so luxuriantly after the defeat of the 1905 Revolution and occupied the minds of social-democratic intellectuals for several years (1907-1912), who revelled in God building and all manner of idealist philosophy in the years of reaction, it is those views in disguised form that the anti-Marxist groups of intellectuals are now attempting to instil in the Proletkult."¹ This refers to the views of A. Bogdanov and others who were formerly supporters of Machism and became theoreticians of the Proletkult after October 1917.

Lenin categorically rejected all vulgarisation of the class approach to art, all forms of dogmatic sectarianism, however catching and apparently revolutionary the phrases which concealed them. He frequently pointed out that superficial arch revolutionariness often masked the most backward views which were alien to Marxism and discredited the principles of revolutionary art. We need only recall his attacks on pseudo-revolutionary, Leftist phenomena in art, his criticism of various sectarian theories on the building of proletarian culture, and his rejection of the various "collectivist platforms". In a memo dated November 1921,

¹ *On the Party and Soviet Press*, p. 221

Lenin requested information about a certain "collectivists' platform" which had been sent to him "I have not read it yet," he wrote, "but I can see a lot of strange things in it. Who wrote it? What are their names? Where was it published? Where is it being circulated? By whom? Who is behind all this?"¹ As it turned out, the "collectivists' platform" was a sectarian document which had been brought out for the Second Congress of the Proletkult, contained an open attack on the Party's policy in the field of culture and propagated Machism in the field of philosophy. In a letter to members of the Politbureau of the Party Central Committee, Lenin exposed the harmful dogmatic sectarian nature of the platform "We are collectivists' (*Vperyodovtsi*, Bogdanovites, Proletkultists etc) ',² and stressed the need to subject it to thorough criticism. He urged that the organs of the Proletkult should be cleansed of petty bourgeois, philistine elements and that all attempts to substitute bourgeois idealist philosophy for a materialist world outlook should be ideologically rebuffed.

The arguments of Marx, Engels and Lenin demonstrate most vividly the links between art and life. They flatly rejected all tendencies to restrict art to the sphere of speculation, albeit the most correct speculation, and noted that it is the embodiment of other tangible aspects of life, the material fabric of the artistic image.

The tendentious, anti-Marxist students of literature, as we know, have formulated and are trying to impose their own conception of the twenties, aimed against the principles of socialist revolutionary art. Today the anti-socialist ideologists are trying to distort the meaning of Lenin's critical statements about the Proletkult and use them to reject the ideological and artistic principles of Soviet literature. In particular, the American critic Herman Ermolayev in his book *Soviet Theories of Literature: The Genesis of Socialist Realism* (published by the University of California in 1963) gives a very arbitrary interpretation of Lenin's attitude towards the Proletkult in order to criticise the subsequent development of Soviet art. He represents Lenin's criticism of Proletkult theories as a denial of the historical possibility of creating proletarian culture. In support of this thesis

¹ *V. I. Lenin on Literature and Art*, p. 471

² *Ibid.*, p. 472

Lenin's views are equated with those of such critics as Voronsky who had a very one-sided idea of the path which socialist culture should take. In this connection Ermolayev harps on the idea that Voronsky, like Lenin, thought the development of socialist culture would be possible only in the remote future. Such interpretations are far removed from the truth. It is Lenin's principle that socialist culture should rest on the sum total of mankind's spiritual achievements that makes its fruitful development and flourishing a real possibility.

In 1920, under the influence of its leaders, the Proletkult Congress passed some obviously mistaken resolutions. In reply to this Lenin wrote a letter, a draft resolution "On Proletarian Culture". The fourth point of this resolution read as follows: "Marxism has won its historic significance as the ideology of the revolutionary proletariat because, far from rejecting the most valuable achievements of the bourgeois epoch, it has, on the contrary, assimilated and refashioned everything of value in the more than two thousand years of the development of human thought and culture."¹

Lenin resolutely attacked the leadership of the Proletkult who demanded independence from the Soviet state. Revealing the demagogic nature of Proletkult views on the development of culture, he criticised their claims to "autonomy" and their vulgar arguments about the freedom of the artist, which were directed against the leadership of the Party.

As we know, Lenin charged Lunacharsky with the task of opposing these views. When Lunacharsky failed to do so, Lenin censured him. Lunacharsky himself writes about this as follows: "Vladimir Ilyich and I also had a fairly strong difference of opinion about the Proletkult. Once he even gave me quite a severe reprimand."

"During the Proletkult Congress in October 1920 Vladimir Ilyich entrusted me with the task of attending it and stating definitely that the Proletkult should be under the guidance of the People's Commissariat of Education and regard itself as one of the latter's bodies, etc. In other words, Vladimir Ilyich wanted us to bring the Proletkult closer to the state, at the same time he was also taking steps to bring it closer

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works* Vol. 31, p. 317

to the Party I worded my speech at the Congress to make it sound fairly evasive and conciliatory. An even more toned down version of it was given to Vladimir Ilyich. He summoned me and gave me a good ticking off.¹ Lenin's draft resolution on the Proletkult also stresses that the arts must be linked with the ideas of the Party and the Soviet state.

In discussing the many important phenomena in Soviet literature and art in the early twenties, one should not forget that their roots very often went far back into the past and that vestiges of these phenomena did not disappear immediately, but continue to exist in the new conditions in different forms. It is perfectly justifiable to view Lenin's rejection of a number of anti-realist or sectarian phenomena in the early years of the development of Soviet art, not as an isolated feature, but as one of the links in a chain, as the development of the consistent struggle against decadence in philosophy and aesthetics which he began long before the revolution.

The passage of time has convincingly demonstrated the general fundamental significance of Lenin's assessments of Futurism and the correctness of the definition they provide of the basic trends of development in present-day artistic culture.

Let us recall the following statement by Lunacharsky: "We have come very near to falling under the influence of the Futurists and LEF. But having realised that in bourgeois culture itself these offsprings of the bourgeois world are the expression of an age when the bourgeoisie is beginning to renounce all content whatsoever, and taking the paths of pure formalism, even complete lack of content of the Futurist, Dadaist, etc. type, the proletariat, which bears such a vast new content, could only reject scornfully this lifeless juggling."²

Lenin's struggle against sectarian Bogdanov Proletkult theories is instructive in many respects. It is significant that Lenin expressed his views on commitment to people in literature and the arts during the struggle against vulgar sectarian views on art in the polemic with the programme of the Proletkult theoreticians and the Futurists. Lenin

¹ V. I. Lenin on Literature and Art p. 667

² A. V. Lunacharsky, *Articles on Soviet Literature*, Moscow, 1958, p. 95 (in Russian)

actively objected to the spread of these trends, first and foremost because of the anti popular nature of their ideological and artistic principles

There is no historical or factual basis whatsoever in the attempts of certain students of literature, who accept the sectarian obsessions of the Futurists quite indiscriminately as the romantic expression of the revolution, to reject criticism of Futurism by presenting this criticism as the speculative product of a later period which ignores the specific features of the age. In fact the first few years after the October Revolution are marked by a highly critical attitude on the part of the Soviet public towards the Imagists and Futurists

In strongly criticising the Proletkult and Futurist programmes Lenin was expressing the opinion of broad sections of the Soviet public. Many magazines and newspapers between 1918 and 1920 carried a great deal of material conveying the protest of the working masses against the dominance of Futurists and various Leftist Cosmists in art. The magazine *Vestnik Zhizni* (Herald of Life) stated openly that the broad mass of workers had "begun to protest loudly against the substitutes for revolutionary and proletarian art with which they have been crammed for many months. On the other hand, this has also forced the official patrons or rather connivers of Futurism to take a good look at it"¹

Here one must take into account the historically determined complexity of the relations between the Proletkult and the so-called Left wing groups and trends. The distinctive feature of the Proletkult theory lay in its strange combination of subjectivist idealist decadent views with primitive Makhaisky vulgarisation. In many of their general declarations and articles the Proletkultists expressed an emphatically negative opinion of Futurism and formal trends in painting, relegating them totally to the legacy of the old world

The most far-seeing and perceptive participants in the literary movement of the early post revolutionary period saw clearly the true nature of the Futurist Leftist claims. In an entry in his diary, Dmitri Furmanov defined the most essential features of the Futurist views on art as follows: "1 Mockery of the past 2 Denial of all merit in other

¹ *Vestnik Zhizni*, No 6-7, 1919, p 72.

schools and trends 3 Claim to have a monopoly 4 Claim to be eternal 5 Pretending to be 'extra intellectual' and juggling with 'clever' terminology 6 Bragging of greatness 7 Transitoriness 8 Mediocrity of insolent, arrogant 'pioneers' 9 Artificiality, affectation"¹

Lenin's appeal to writers and publicists to keep closer to reality, to observe with care the destruction of the old and the building of the new, was prompted by the urgent need of the times, the need to counteract the spread in literature, particularly in the Proletkult and Futurism, of an abstract attitude towards the revolution, which concealed the true face of Soviet reality, the real everyday life of millions of working people. The limitations of the approach of some literary trends to the new reality, their unhistorical and one-sided perception of it, were strongly pronounced in the early period of Soviet literature. Certain leaders of the Proletkult, Alexander Bogdanov for example, in announcing the new art did not even mention the existence of Soviet power. From the works and articles of many Proletkult writers it was impossible to find out what was really happening in the country. The glorification of "cosmic" strivings, the faceless worker, abstract factories and steel hands did not bear the slightest relation to the real life of the people. Reading Proletkult magazines it was impossible not only to obtain a coherent picture of the times, but also to realise that there was a civil war going on in the country and the population was suffering great hardships—hunger, economic dislocation, privations.

Whereas the Imagists, Constructivists, Futurists and similar decadent trends influenced the comparatively narrow circle of the intelligentsia, the Proletkult sought to attract the broad mass of young workers. Lenin drew a clear distinction between the desire of the masses, the rank and file participants in the Proletkult organisations, for knowledge and creative activity, and the programme of the Proletkult theoreticians. The years of bitter struggle against foreign interventionists and internal counter-revolution, which were accompanied by economic dislocation and famine, did not put a stop to cultural construction in our country. The creative upsurge triggered off by the October Revolution,

¹ *D. Furmanov Archive* Manuscript Department of the Gorky Institute of World Literature (in Russian)

the striving of workers and peasants for education and culture, expressed themselves in a great variety of forms. One of these forms was the Proletkult

It would, of course, be anti historical to equate the powerful movement of the working masses towards culture and creative activity, which was inspired by the October Revolution with the]sectarian views of the Proletkult theoreticians There can be no doubt that the mass of participants in the Proletkult were governed by the best of motives and really were striving to create a new revolutionary art The letter on the Proletkult of the Central Committee of the Party has the following to say on this point "The Central Committee not only does not wish to curb the initiative of the working class intelligentsia in the sphere of creative writing, but, on the contrary, it wishes to create a healthier, more normal climate for this initiative and give it the opportunity to exert a positive influence on creative writing as a whole The Central Committee is well aware that now, with the war nearly over, the workers will become increasingly interested in questions of creative writing and proletarian culture The Central Committee appreciates and respects the desire of progressive workers to raise for discussion the questions pertaining to the richer spiritual development of the individual, etc."¹ This made it particularly necessary to protect the cultural life of the people from the influence of vulgarised sectarian theories

The Proletkult was a striking, but highly contradictory phenomenon It is only in the light of this concrete historical character that one can understand its subsequent evolution, and its place in the literary and spiritual life of the young Soviet Land

Many documents and memoirs bear witness to the contradictions in the Proletkult Even after the letter of the Central Committee of the RCP(B) some Proletkult members did not understand the criticism of their programme and saw it as both inopportune and unduly harsh At a Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee of the All Russia Union of the Proletkult held from 16 to 20 December, 1920, a delegation was appointed to visit Lenin with the aim of defending their position A valuable account of the delegation's talk with Lenin is contained in F Volgin's memoirs

¹ *On the Party and Soviet Press*, pp. 221-22 (in Russian). :

"It happened in December 1920 Not long before this the Central Committee of the RCP(B) had published a letter directed against certain ideological deviations in the Proletkult I now realise that this letter was aimed against a fairly strong and authoritative non communist influence within the Proletkult Central Committee itself, but at the time, when we had assembled in Moscow for the Plenary Meeting of the Proletkult Central Committee, we decided this blow to the Proletkult was too severe and unjust and resolved to go and complain to Lenin Four people were appointed as representatives Comrade Pletnyov, then head of the literary department of the Chief Committee for Political Education, Blagonravov from the All Union Central Council of Trade Unions, Nikitin, a Petrograd worker, and ~~L~~ Lenin agreed to receive us "

Lenin heard what the delegation had to say, but put his point of view clearly After talking to him the delegates agreed that the letter from the Central Committee was basically right With regard to the Proletkult, Lenin said that "it was a good thing That it was good when our workers wrote plays, composed poetry, published magazines and books, gave theatrical performances in their clubs, that it was good that they should give expression to their creative powers in all forms of the arts and perfect them, but that it was bad when attempts were made to inject a hostile ideological influence through the organisation of the Proletkult This was obviously a reference to the ideas of the Bogdanov set which carried a fair amount of weight in the Proletkult at that time ¹

Lenin undoubtedly supported the interest of the mass of rank and file Proletkult members, workers and peasants, in revolutionary creative writing, their desire to create a new culture and art

For all their abstractness, the works of the Proletkult poets were pervaded with great romantic, revolutionary fervour But the superficial ultra revolutionary nature of the theories of the Proletkult leaders could not conceal their true sectarian meaning

Influenced by Lenin's criticism many writers, painters and theatre workers left the Proletkult organisations. The

¹ *V I Lenin on Literature and Art*, pp 698-99

poet Vassily Kazin recalls that Lenin's criticism made a great impression on many Proletkult members

After Lenin's speech on April 23, 1920, Vassily Kazin and a group of writers announced that they were leaving the Proletkult in a letter to *Pravda*. "A group of writers was set up in the literary department of the People's Commissariat of Education under the personal direction of Lunacharsky himself Anatoly Vassilievich, on whose recommendation my first collection of poetry *Workers' May* was published, talked to us a lot about Lenin, and always with great affection I am quite sure that I am indebted to Lunacharsky for the great joy I experienced on discovering that a copy of my *Workers' May* was in Lenin's private library"¹

While criticising the mistakes of the Proletkult, Lenin continued to pay careful attention to its activities. On November 22, 1921, the question of the Proletkult was discussed at a meeting of the Politbureau of the Central Committee of the RCP(B). A resolution was passed which defined the Proletkult's role in carrying out the task of satisfying the spiritual needs of the working people and was designed to improve its working. This resolution is one of the most important documents showing the attitude of the Party to the Proletkult. It reads as follows: "In view of the need to give all possible assistance to the cultural requirements of the proletariat which will increase in step with economic growth, the Central Committee of the RCP(B) considers it necessary

- 1 to draw the serious attention of the whole Party to work in the Proletkult organisations, which are to become one of the Party apparatuses for satisfying the cultural requirements of the proletariat, closely connected with the state education apparatus and advancing together with it under the single banner of Marxism,

- 2 to make all Gubernia committees and local Party organisations responsible for rendering assistance to the Proletkult organisations and strengthening ideological and organisational links with them,

- 3 to charge Communists working in the Proletkult with the task of cleansing the Proletkult organisations from petty

¹ V. Kazin, "One April Evening" in the collection *The Live Lenin*, Moscow 1965, p. 212 (in Russian)

bourgeois elements and ideologically rebuffing all attempts to replace the materialist world outlook by the surrogates of bourgeois idealist philosophy (Bogdanov, etc),

"4 to demand that the Party press pay more attention to cultural work among the proletariat,

5 the Central Committee points out that its letter of last year referred to those elements, insignificant in number who have now openly revealed themselves in a special platform of the so called 'collectivists' and which, as almost a year's experience has shown, the overwhelming majority of workers in the Proletkult organisations do not support "1

The Central Committee's explanation confirms the need, when explaining the literary phenomena of the years immediately following the revolution, to distinguish the revolutionary enthusiasm, the striving of the masses to master spiritual values and artistic creativity, from the sectarian views of the theoreticians who composed the Proletkult's programmes and declarations

If one is to define the general tendency in the development of the arts as it appears in the theories of the Machists and ideologists of the Proletkult and Futurism, it is the impoverishment and schematisation of art, because artistic creativity was divorced from life and its specific characteristics were totally ignored

It was Lenin's concern to ensure a rich spiritual life for the people which prompted him to launch such fierce attacks on the decadents, Proletkultists, Futurists and all manner of pseudo-innovators

In studying Lenin's attitude towards ultra Leftist groups in the early post Revolution years one must take into account the evolution of these groups under the influence of the new Soviet social and literary environment. The views and work of the members of these groups did not remain static, but developed

The historical approach is one of the basic scientific methodological principles which were strictly applied by Lenin in assessing any phenomenon of political or spiritual life

In a lecture on the state which he gave in 1919 at the Sverdlov University, Lenin stressed that the most important

¹ *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, No 1, 1958, p 38.

thing was "to examine every question from the standpoint of how the given phenomenon arose in history and what were the principal stages in its development, and, from the standpoint of its development, to examine what it has become today" ¹

A proper study of the modernist and literary groupings demands that most careful account should be taken of the differentiation and change which took place in them under the influence of the ideas of the Revolution. In particular, the LEF group, for all its contradictions, differed in many respects from pre-revolutionary Futurism. And the change in Lenin's attitude to Mayakovsky (Lenin "became kinder" to Mayakovsky, to quote Nadezhda Krupskaya) was the result of the development of the work of Mayakovsky and other highly talented members of the LEF group under the influence of the Revolution, of their organic inclusion in the building of socialist culture.

Lenin drew attention to the significance and depth of the revolutionary change that must take place in the cultural life of the people. Such a framing of the question was determined by Lenin's sober, extremely critical assessment of the state of cultural development in the country during the first post-Revolution years. The theme of its cultural backwardness was developed by Lenin in a series of articles written shortly before his death: "Pages from a Diary", "On Co-operation", "Better Fewer, But Better". He constantly emphasised the difficulty of carrying out the tasks of the cultural revolution, the need to transfer the centre of gravity to solving cultural problems which he described as a turning point in the spiritual life of the masses.

Many a time Lenin spoke of the complexity and difficulty involved in the development of socialist culture. He warned that it should not be regarded as a single short act or a problem that could be quickly solved.

"A cultural problem cannot be solved as quickly as political and military problems. In a period of acute crisis it is possible to achieve a political victory within a few weeks. It is possible to obtain victory in war in a few months. But it is impossible to achieve a cultural victory in such a short time. By its very nature it requires a longer period,

¹ V I Lenin, *Collected Works* Vol. 29, p. 473.

and we must adapt ourselves to this longer period, plan our work accordingly, and display the maximum of perseverance, persistence and method "¹

Delivering a warning in 1923 against various types of sectarianism and ignorance, Lenin advised "In matters of culture, haste and sweeping measures are most harmful. Many of our young writers and Communists should get this well into their heads "²

History has confirmed the truth of this warning

In his polemics with various vulgarisers Lenin categorically rejected the idea that socialist culture is formed on the basis of ready made, previously worked-out theses. As everywhere in the building of a new life, the development of socialist culture is a creative process requiring the independent solution of problems, intense searching, hard work and learning from the historical experience of the revolutionary age

Lenin's statements on the cultural phenomena of the twenties can be understood in their entirety only in organic connection with his theory of knowledge, with his views on the general purpose of art and literature. Proceeding from all Lenin's judgements on art in the aggregate, one comes to the basic conclusion that no formalistic tricks can be a substitute for authenticity and power of thought and feeling

Any attempt to deflect Soviet art from the highroad of progressive world culture into the blind alleys of modernism was always implacably resisted by Lenin. Of great importance for an understanding of Lenin's views on the development of socialist culture are his marginal notes on an article entitled "On the Ideological Front" published in *Pravda* on 17th September, 1922 by Pletnyov, one of the ideologists of the Proletkult. Pletnyov took a sectarian view of the development of culture in the Soviet Land, regarding it as an isolated laboratory process, divorced from the cultural heritage of the past. Next to his words "the creation of a new proletarian class culture is the main aim of the Proletkult" Lenin wrote an ironic "ha ha!" Pletnyov urged the total dismissal of the old technological and artistic intelligentsia, declaring it incapable of creating a new

¹ V. I. Lenin *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, pp. 78-79

² *Ibid.*, p. 487

technology and a new art Lenin criticised these absurd views

"The task of building a proletarian culture can be solved only by the forces of the proletariat itself, the scientists, artists, engineers etc., who have emerged from the proletariat," declared Pletnyov. Lenin underlined the word *only* and categorically rejected this sectarian idea by writing "arch fiction" ¹ next to it.

Lenin's critical comments on the margins of this article are indicative of his negative attitude towards the tendency to make an oversimplified connection between questions of culture, in particular artistic creativity, with production, science and technology.

Lenin gave a general devastating description of Pletnyov's article "On the Ideological Front" in a note to Bukharin which contained his objection to the publication of this article. 'Now, why print stupidities in the guise of the article by Pletnyov, who puts on pompous airs with all the learned and fashionable words he can? The author has to learn not 'proletarian' science, but simply to learn. Why, this is falsification of historical materialism!'"²

According to Proletkult and Futurist theories, art in the old sense of the word was to disappear, to dissolve into life. The members of LEF believed that revolutionary literature was a "literature of fact", i.e., they rejected its aesthetic, cognitive and independent functions. The writer was given the strictly utilitarian and technical role of the "verbal making of things" and slogans.

The Proletkult journals *Proletarskaya kultura* (Proletarian Culture) and *Gorn* propagated Bogdanov's old theory on the inevitability of art withering away in a socialist society, which he had developed in the period of reaction, and now presented as the latest achievement of revolutionary thought in a great many versions.

It was with this aim of dissolving art in everyday life, i.e., essentially of destroying it, that the Futurists and members of LEF put forward their programme of contrasting, to use their terminology, propaganda to the depiction of everyday life, the businesslike processing of words to lyricism, the adventure story to *belles lettres*, the newspaper

¹ V. I. Lenin on Literature and Art p. 573

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 35, p. 554

satire and propaganda literature to generalisation, and 'production movement' to emotional experience

We know from Nadezhda Krupskaya that Lenin liked Ilya Ehrenburg's novel *The Extraordinary Adventures of Julio Jurenito and His Disciples* (1921) for its interesting and vivid portrayal of war. Ehrenburg's name is also mentioned in Lenin's critical notes on Pletnyov's article 'On the Ideological Front'. Besides nihilistic views on the classical heritage of the past, this article contains the statement that the proletarian artist must be "at one and the same time both artist and worker", that in art "*the scheme of individualistic emotional experiences gives way to the movements of the masses*" and the background of the literary work is expanded to immense proportions".¹ The idea of the destruction of art, its dissolution in production, is also developed. "The beauty of the aeroplane," wrote Pletnyov, "was born not of the desire to make it beautiful, but of its construction which facilitates flight, yet its beauty both on the ground and in the air is indisputable. *The fine arts of the new world will be production arts, or they will not exist at all*".² Among his many marginal notes Lenin wrote "Ehrenburg". There is good reason to believe that the idea of Ehrenburg arose here in connection with the fact that similar views on the development of art are expressed by the sceptic Jurenito, the hero of Ehrenburg's novel. In the chapter "The Teacher's Reflections on Art" and in many other parts of the book the opinion is clearly expressed that revolutionary art cannot exist independently, but must dissolve in production and everyday life, and take on a purely utilitarian nature.

"Thus, without hesitation, art must be banned, like the manufacture of liquor or the import of opium. This is made all the easier by the fact that art has become decrepit and is itself striving to end its ignominious old age by suicide.

"One must simply channel this endeavour, ban painting as such, so that the picture frame does not tempt the artist back to the extravagance of the image, and attach artists to various branches of production. The plastic arts will cease to exist independently and threaten society, but will create a communist way of life, houses, plates, trousers. Instead of Picasso's violins we shall have a good chair

¹ *V I Lenin on Literature and Art* p. 577

² *Ibid*

"The same applies to other forms of art. Poetry is assimilating the language of newspapers, telegrams, business talks, peeling off layer after layer rhyme, metre, imagery, feeling, conventions and, finally, rhythm, and is left naked, in no way remarkable, and it requires great professional experience to understand why some modern poetry is poetry and not leading articles or an advertisement for Spermin."¹

Here the hero of the novel *Julio Jurenito* is expressing the same idea that Pletnyov develops in his article and that Lenin defined crushingly as "arch fiction." The false pseudo-innovatory theories of the new "constructivist" art had much in common historically with the Leftist theories of the Proletkultists who were trying to direct art along the path of schematism and sectarianism.

Lenin's attitude towards Leftist vulgar ideas exerted a considerable influence on the formation of socialist culture abroad, making themselves felt in the views and creative activity of leading representatives of revolutionary literature. Lenin's views prevented the spreading of the idea that only Leftist modernist trends constituted real revolutionary art. As we know, this idea was widespread among fairly large sections of the intelligentsia. To the present day there are those who insist that Futurism, Cubism and other modernist phenomena express the revolutionary spirit and progressive artistic trends of the age.

The Marxist critical thought of many capitalist countries in the twenties and in later years has developed on the basis of Lenin's conception of the cultural revolution. Many eminent figures in foreign socialist parties sincerely believed at that time in the revolutionary nature of vulgarised, ultra-Left ideas and regarded them as the main path for the development of socialist art. The spread of Lenin's ideas and his doctrine on the cultural revolution played an important role in combating pseudo-revolutionary ideas. For example, in bourgeois Poland J. Marchlewski and A. Sokolicz made a considerable contribution to the formation of socialist art by proceeding from Lenin's doctrine on the cultural revolution. At a time when fairly large circles of the revolutionary intelligentsia were enthusiastic about one-sided sectar-

¹ Ilya Ehrenburg *The Extraordinary Adventures of Julio Jurenito and His Disciples*, Moscow-Berlin, 1922, pp. 301-02 (in Russian).

ian ideas, Sokolicz wrote her brochures *On the Artistic Culture of the Proletariat* and *Walt Whitman* in which she discussed problems of forming the new, revolutionary, socialist art from the Marxist viewpoint

"As it advances into the future," she wrote, "the proletariat will to a certain extent become heir to the bourgeoisie not only in the economic sphere, but also in the sphere of those spiritual resources which have been accumulated by past generations over the centuries. The results of the creative toil of the human mind have survived various political and social orders for neither revolutions nor other upheavals have broken the powerful, eternally vital thread of the development of the human mind. The proletariat will not and cannot destroy science and art, for they are the source of the idea on which it is building its future" ¹

In spite of all the bans and repressive measures by the royal government of Rumania, the Leninist idea of the cultural revolution was propagated in the publications of the Rumanian Communist Party. In 1921 the newspaper *Socialist Youth* published a summary of Lenin's speech at the Third All Russia Youth Congress. Later the Party journal *Proletarian Culture* gave wide publicity to Lenin's views on the development of proletarian culture. The first issue of the journal contained the following passage:

"At the present time, when the social aspect is paramount and eclipses everything else, the bourgeoisie, as well as creating an art for its own entertainment, has also created an art which hypnotises and deceives the working class. But the proletariat too, especially in Russia and Western Europe, has its own class art, which expresses truth as well as beauty, and promotes the liberation of the proletariat and the whole of mankind." The journal also published Lenin's talk with Clara Zetkin under the title "Lenin on Art and Culture" ² One might cite many other similar examples.

Lenin's ideas paved the way for the formation of a new and revolutionary literature and helped combat bourgeois aesthetics and pseudo-revolutionary Leftist ideas which were preventing the emergence of a truly socialist art.

The prominent Czech revolutionary poet S. K. Neumann

¹ A. Sokolicz-Merkłowa *Walt Whitman*, Warszawa, 1921, Biblioteka "Świat pracy" n. 4 (in Polish)

² *Proletarian Culture*, Bucharest, No. 1, 1923, p. 2.

wrote in 1922 "For us, socialists, the Russian Revolution has been a great school of theoretical and practical knowledge" Later in an article entitled "Epilogue a Year Later" he recalled that "Vladimir Ilyich's victory soon put an end to my errors"¹ The poet had abandoned his Leftist anarchist enthusiasms and become one of the greatest figures in Czech socialist literature

Occasionally vulgar statements of sectarian critics of today are compared with the views of Proletkult theoreticians and exponents of other oversimplified ideas in the early period of the history of Soviet literature, the true meaning of which was revealed by Lenin Such a comparison is justified to a certain extent One can indeed find points of similarity here But there is also a great difference Many writers at that time were seeking for the main paths of development of socialist art Today however, socialist art has a vast store of ideological and artistic experience at its disposal And the vulgarisers of today deliberately ignore this invaluable experience for the sake of their own preconceived ideas, reject it, and force it into primitive, lifeless schemes

Lenin was merciless in his criticism of all attempts to impoverish Soviet art, to lower its level, to replace truly artistic creation by cheap substitutes It was his concern for the richness of the people's spiritual life that made Lenin launch such fierce attacks on the decadents, Proletkultists, Futurists and all other pseudo-innovators who were seeking to distract the people from true artistic values accumulated by mankind and offer them instead pathetic, Leftist fabrications disguised as proletarian art

* * *

On the eve of the October Revolution Lenin wrote "A revolution is the incredibly complicated and painful process of the death of the old and birth of the new social order, of the mode of life of tens of millions of people"²

The complexity and tortuousness of the clash between

¹ *Kratkiye soobshcheniya Instituta slavyanovedeniya*, USSR Academy of Sciences No 31 1961 p 58 (in Russian)

² V I Lenin, *Collected Works* Vol. 26, p 118.

the old and the new also determined the formation of the young revolutionary art. Hence the acuteness of the problem of tradition and innovation. The urge to define what is new and what is old is perfectly legitimate in an age of radical change in the life of a people. The assertion of their understanding of the revolutionary and the old, innovation and tradition is the central theme of all the declarations, manifestoes and programmes of all literary groupings and trends in the early post-Revolution years. Disputes on this subject arise and intensify in all periods of great change in the development of art. The interpretation of traditions and innovation is one of the main prerequisites for understanding the development of artistic culture, for envisaging the shape of art in the future.

Lenin, by paying so much attention to the theme of innovation and tradition, provided an answer to questions which were of an immediate importance.

The sharp distinction which Lenin made between indisputable classical literary values, on the one hand, and modernism and decadence, on the other, and his attaching of prime importance to the problem of the cultural in particular, the artistic heritage, were factors of paramount importance. It was a question not only of preserving the cultural values of the past, but also of defining the nature and content, as well as the paths of the development of Soviet literature. Two main conflicting lines of historical development for Russian and world art had emerged clearly even before the Revolution. One line consisted of basing art on the real life of the popular masses who were building socialism, and developing the best traditions of the old classical writers both realist and romantic. The other line was linked with decadence, with all manner of modernist trends. Lenin proceeded here from a profound analysis of the concrete historical tendencies which emerged in the cultural development of the first two decades of the twentieth century, and the divergence between which became particularly acute in the years immediately following the Great October Revolution.

The Proletkult theoreticians Bogdanov, Plekhanov and others preached the dangerous theory that proletarian culture could be created artificially, in the laboratory. In their sectarian interpretation of the idea of the class nature of art they encouraged a nihilistic attitude towards the

artistic heritage of the past and denied the importance of classical literature and national traditions

Revealing the pseudo revolutionary nature of the Proletkult programme, Lenin defended the classical artistic heritage of the past from nihilistic attacks and outlined paths for the flowering of socialist culture. He clearly defined the meaning of continuity and innovation in literature. Socialist culture does not arise out of thin air and is not the product of "specialists" on proletarian "culture", as the Proletkultists and other vulgarisers of Marxism represented. The culture of the new socialist society, Lenin teaches us, is the logical continuation and sum total of all that is best and most valuable in the development of world culture. Lenin consistently developed the ideas expressed by him in a number of works even before the Revolution in particular in the article "Party Organisation and Party Literature". The free literature of the future is here described as being based on "bringing about permanent interaction between the experience of the past and the experience of the present"¹

Continuity in the Leninist understanding of the word has nothing in common with trivial borrowing, the attitude which, as we know, produced a whole system of comparative and all manner of formalistic conceptions.

The Marxist-Leninist understanding of innovation and continuity necessarily presupposes the creative originality of the artist, his indissoluble link with the life of his people, the enrichment of his work by the experience of the mass of working people, and a critical attitude towards the heritage of the past. Lenin stressed "Not the *invention* of a new proletarian culture but the *development* of the finest examples, traditions and results of the *existing* culture from the standpoint of the Marxist world outlook and the conditions of life and struggle of the proletariat in the age of its dictatorship"². These words of Lenin's not only reveal the vulgarised nature of the false theories of the various pseudo innovators, but also emphasise the idea that socialist art includes, as an integral part, the positive experience of the best specimens of the artistic culture of the past.

The Leninist conception of the two cultures in each

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works* Vol. 10 p. 49

² V I Lenin *on Literature and Art*, p. 469.

national culture under capitalism is of the utmost importance for a correct understanding of the problem of the artistic heritage

Based on the creative activity of the working people, who inspire the progressive practitioners of the arts, there gradually form in the old society alongside the dominant culture of the exploiting class, elements of a new democratic and socialist culture. They are that integral part of the heritage which serves as the basis for the building of a new culture.

According to certain historians of literature, the nihilistic attitude to the artistic heritage on the part of the Proletkultists Futurists and Constructivists was a peculiar expression of the extremes in the development of young revolutionary art, of the turbulent strength of its feeling etc. In actual fact, this is very remote from the truth. Rejection of classical artistic values has long been an organic feature of all decadent schools of the past and present, which emerged clearly at the end of the nineteenth century and particularly in the first decade of the twentieth.

The Proletkult's disparaging attitude towards the classical artistic heritage had very little in common with the enthusiasm of the revolutionary youth, with its passions and extremes. The nihilistic attitude towards artistic traditions was, on the contrary, a sign that art had lost a firm foundation in life. The negative view of national artistic traditions was taken up by the Proletkult theoreticians as early as in the period of reaction 1907-1910. The vulgar idea about the absence of national features in the collective psychology of the proletariat, developed by Bogdanov, coincided with the scorn in which the modernist trends held the classical heritage. The writings of the Proletkult leaders depict the proletariat as being alien to the idea of Motherland and lacking in any national features and cultural traditions. Hence the preaching by Bogdanov and other Proletkult theoreticians of the abstract faceless collective nature of revolutionary art, which excluded all concrete historical and national features.

It should be remembered that already in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* Lenin criticised the anti-realist views of the empirio-critic Bazarov who sought to find philosophical substantiation for rejecting the artistic treasures of the past. Following in the footsteps of Bogdanov, Bazarov

wrote an article entitled "Mysticism and Realism in Our Time", criticised by Lenin as an apology for Machism, which defiantly proclaimed the inevitability of the destruction of artistic treasures accumulated in the past. In particular Bazarov attacked those socialists who asserted that socialism does not destroy cultural values, but preserves, for example, all the refinement of classical lyrical poetry, the poetic expression of human emotions. It is significant that in support of his nihilistic attitude to the classical artistic heritage, the Machist "socialist" Bazarov quoted the decadent statements of Bryusov, his *Last Martyrs*, which, according to Bazarov, "expresses very accurately the direct contrast between the dying culture and the culture which is being born. The culture of the past is described here as "the apotheosis of refined parasitism. 'But we have no grounds whatsoever," states Bazarov, "for bowing and scraping before the frail 'values of corrupt bourgeois culture and being ashamed of our barbarianism." ¹ How reminiscent this is of the arguments of the Proletkultists, Futurists and Constructivists in the twenties!

Lenin's marginal notes on V. Shulyatkov's book *The Justification of Capitalism and West European Philosophy* also represent passionate defence of human cultural values and the artistic heritage. Shulyatkov gives a pretentious and crudely distorted picture of the development of all pre-Marxist philosophy, reducing it to justification and defence of the mercenary interests of the bourgeois classes, and depicting it as nothing but the servant of the exploiters. All philosophical categories and terms are seen by Shulyatkov as code names for social classes and groups. Lenin pointed out the vulgarising intent of such an approach, which in fact disarms and robs the working people, depriving them of the invaluable cultural wealth accumulated by mankind over the centuries.

All the anti-realist trends of the twenties had their own characteristic features. There were distinct features which distinguished the Cosmists from the Futurists and the Imagists from the Constructivists. Yet all of them were united by a hostile attitude to the classical heritage and realist artistic traditions. Lenin saw the great danger which

¹ *Essays on Marxist Philosophy* St. Petersburg 1908 pp. 63-64 (in Russian)

these apparently ultra Leftist trends presented for the development of socialist culture, and showed how they could impoverish the spiritual life of the people and suck the lifeblood from the arts. He demonstrated clearly how deceptive and illusory were the innovations of these trends and how they entrained the collapse of artistic culture. The subsequent development of the arts and the discovery of genuinely new paths have confirmed the accuracy of Lenin's aesthetic views. The false nature of the Proletkult and Futurist programmes has emerged clearly in their vain attempts to discredit the classical works of Soviet literature.

The formalists directed the full force of their criticism or, to be more precise, of their vicious attacks primarily at the greatest revolutionary writer of the modern age, Maxim Gorky. A large number of documents prove conclusively that for many years the representatives of formalism literally "persecuted" Gorky, for which they were rewarded with enthusiastic compliments from those abroad who were hostile to Soviet literature. Gorky's writing was disparagingly referred to as "ethnography", "the portrayal of everyday life", an uninspired, outdated phenomenon alien to revolutionary art. The realism of Gorky's writing and characterisation, in particular of his novel *Mother*, was also alien to the Proletkult theoreticians.

Many other fine realist works of the time which later became classics were subjected to merciless attacks of formalists, Futurists and members of LEF in the twenties. They were all branded as alien to the art of the revolution, useless, harmful, etc.

The subjective enthusiasms of a number of writers connected with these groups, their mistakes and their importunate "hunting down" of 'old fashioned realists' are understandable. Yet recent attempts to idealise these trends, and again, contrary to Lenin's definition, to resurrect the false legend that they alone were revolutionary, do not contain a grain of historical truth. One surely cannot ignore such historical facts as the systematic vindictive ridiculing of Soviet literary classics.

To a great extent it was his desire to defend culture and his concern for the spiritual life of the people that provoked Lenin's strongly critical response to Mayakovsky's poem *150,000,000*. Besides revolutionary enthusiasm this work contained nihilistic attacks on classical writers and

appeals to destroy cultural values. In Mayakovsky's writings the protest against bourgeois civilisation sometimes turned into a universal rejection of culture into threats against "the classics cosy in their holes", into Futurist appeals to throw "cultural confetti" to the winds, etc.

Such tendencies were unacceptable to Lenin who was always critical of the ultra Leftist phrase and knew its true meaning. Lenin branded as nonsense, sheer nonsense, rejection of the beautiful merely because it was 'old'. "The beautiful must be preserved, taken as an example, as the point of departure even if it is old," he said. "Why turn our backs on what is truly beautiful, abandon it as the point of departure for further development solely because it is 'old'? Here is pure hypocrisy and of course unconscious deference to art fashions!"¹

The idea of the truly beautiful as the point of departure for the further development of art was also touched upon by Lenin in his talk with the architect I. V. Zholtovsky. "Discussing the development of Soviet culture in one of our talks," Zholtovsky recalls "Lenin passionately defended true beauty in art. We must proceed from the beautiful," he said, taking it as a model for the formation of the artistic culture of socialist society."²

Basing himself on Lenin's views, Gorky raised the question of the future ascent of socialist art, of the vital need for the creative assimilation of all the riches of human artistic culture. His article "On the Poet's Library" finishes with the following significant words: "Vladimir Ilyich called the rejection of the truly beautiful as the point of departure for further development 'nonsense, sheer nonsense'. And he, Lenin, was a revolutionary of unprecedented, gigantic stature and the founder of the new socialist culture. His mighty intellect, always contained in simple, clear words showed us the path to the new culture and taught us the technique for building it."³

Literary traditions are formed in the active and complex process of the artistic development of the people, struggle, critical reassessment of the heritage from the past, and

¹ V. I. Lenin on Literature and Art p. 250

² *Reminiscences about Vladimir Ilyich Lenin* Vol. 2 Moscow 1957 p. 320 (in Russian)

³ M. Gorky, *Collected Works* Vol. 26 p. 185 (in Russian)

assimilation of the most valuable experience of the modern day. The shaping of traditions is linked with the abolition of outdated standards, with change, with the renovation of art, and primarily with the affirmation of the most progressive experience in the development of literature. Progressive artistic traditions embody the principles and devices of figurative expression of reality which are the most vital and the closest to the people. Therefore tradition and innovation are not mutually exclusive phenomena, as the modernists claim them to be. The only innovation which is stable and original is that which emanates from the firm basis of the artistic experience of the past and the present.

Continuity in the artistic achievements of the various generations is an essential element of progressive art, without which no advance is possible. In defining historical continuity one must proceed from the concrete conditions and national characteristics of literary development. In creating new literary works, true innovators have always based themselves on the achievements of the world classics.

Lenin told Gorky with conviction: "All the old revolutionary literature that exists here and in the rest of Europe must be given to the masses."¹ He gave attentive support to Gorky's plans to print the classics and set up the World Literature publishing house. The programme for this publishing house was set out in a large catalogue entitled *World Literature* and printed in several languages in Petrograd in 1919. It was compiled by a team of eminent literary specialists under Gorky's guidance. V. Bonch-Bruyevich recounts that "when Vladimir Ilyich found out about it, he immediately asked to see the catalogue, studied it in detail and said that it was brilliantly compiled, that everything mentioned in it should be published, of course, that this was extremely necessary for the education of the broad mass of our people and that what was particularly good about it was the fact that not only was the section on Russian literature excellently worked out but also the ones on foreign literature in Russian translation, which was also essential for the education of our country."

"I am very glad that Alexei Maximovich has managed to plan a project of such vast importance here and compile such a splendid catalogue. We must give him all possible

¹ M. Gorky, *Collected Works*, Vol. 17, p. 45 (in Russian).

support in this matter. It will be very useful for our mass of readers and will give Alexei Maximovich the chance to apply his energies abroad, for he has never been happy without something practical to do, added Vladimir Ilyich.

He always has to be busy with something whether it's a magazine or a publishing house. And look what he's done now: drawn up this splendid list of literature.

'Shortly afterwards this question was discussed at a special meeting of the Small Council of People's Commissars and a fairly substantial sum of foreign currency was voted for the organisation of the project abroad.¹

It is most significant that Lenin, himself a great creator and innovator, was the most consistent protector of the classical cultural achievements of the past and rejected all formalistic enthusiasms on principle. This fact stresses the vitality of true innovation which is based on the firm foundation of the preceding cultural achievements. Lenin demanded the retention of the "old" in art if it was close to the people, and if it was truly beautiful, truthful, progressive and vitally necessary.

In order to carry out this vast programme of acquainting the masses with the artistic riches of the past and making them party to the creation of a new socialist art, a number of practical measures were planned and subsequently put into effect under Lenin's guidance.

The publication in August 1918 of a decree by the Council of People's Commissars on the erection of monuments to great socialists and revolutionaries and eminent figures in culture and the arts was an acknowledgement of the enormous role of writers in the cultural development of the people. The names mentioned included Lev Tolstoi, Lermontov, Gogol, Radishchev, Belinsky, Chernyshevsky, Dostoyevsky, Shchedrin and Nekrasov.

Shortly after the Great October Socialist Revolution, when the Civil War was still raging, Lenin signed a number of decrees on the transfer of art treasures to state ownership. As a result of these decrees priceless art treasures which had formerly been owned and used by a small group of people from the propertied classes were declared national property. On November 26, 1918 a decree was issued declaring scientific, literary, musical and artistic works to be state prop-

¹ *Voprosy Literatury*, No. 4, 1963, pp. 93-94.

erty The decree on the setting up of the State Publishing House (January 11, 1918) said "One of the first things which must be provided is cheap editions of the Russian classics for the people" This document laid down the main types of editions of the works of great classical writers

"The publication of their works should be organised according to two types

"A complete scientific edition, the editing of which should be entrusted to the Department of Russian Language and Literature of the Academy of Sciences (after the structure of the latter has been made democratic in accordance with the new state and social order in Russia)

"A shorter edition of selected works This should consist of one compact volume In making their selection the editorial team should be guided, apart from other considerations by the extent to which the individual works are close to the working people, for whom these popular editions are intended All selected works and individual works of special importance should be accompanied by a preface written by eminent critics, historians of literature, etc

"Popular editions of the classics should be sold at cost price, funds permitting, or made available at a reduced price, or even free through libraries serving working democracy"¹

Lenin attached great importance to the widespread publication and dissemination of literature among the popular masses In his article "The Work of the People's Commissariat for Education" he outlined an extensive programme of action aimed at providing the people with 'serious and valuable literary material and the best modern and classical fiction"

"Long before the war, the French bourgeoisie learned to make money by publishing popular fiction, not at 3 50 francs a volume for the gentry, but at 10 centimes (i.e., 35 times as cheap, 4 kopecks at the pre-war rate) in the form of a proletarian newspaper, why, in that case, can't we do the same at the second step from capitalism to communism Why can't we do the same thing and learn, within a year, even in our present state of poverty, to give the people two copies of a newspaper through each of the 50 000 libraries and reading rooms, all the necessary textbooks and world classics, and books on modern science and engineering?

¹ *On the Party and Soviet Press* p. 174.

"We shall learn to do this, I am sure"¹

The consistency of Lenin's views on the classical artistic heritage can be seen clearly from his attitude to the works of Lev Tolstoy. In tsarist Russia it was impossible to publish the complete works of this writer. In his article "L. N. Tolstoy" (1910) Lenin wrote: "If his great works are really to be made the possession of *all*, a struggle must be waged against the system of society which condemns millions and scores of millions to ignorance, benightedness, drudgery and poverty: a socialist revolution must be accomplished."² After the accomplishment of this revolution Lenin initiated the publication of a complete (90 volume) edition of Tolstoy's works which was put out by the State Publishing House for Fiction.

A. V. Lunacharsky, the chairman of the first State Editorial Commission, had this to say about it in an article entitled "Concerning the Commemorative Edition of Tolstoy's Works":

"The question of a state edition of the complete works of L. N. Tolstoy was studied and prepared by the People's Commissariat of Education and other state and party bodies for many years. This question was first raised officially as far back as 1918, when it was brought up *on the personal initiative of V. I. Lenin*" (*Izvestia*, February 10, 1928).

Preparations for the edition and elaboration of its principles and general plan began in 1919, under Lenin. Lenin carefully studied V. Chertkov's proposals concerning the forthcoming edition and forwarded them to the People's Commissariat of Education and the State Publishing House. The letter dated February 27, 1919, which V. Chertkov sent to Lenin, bears the following notes: 1) To the People's Commissariat of Education Comrade Pokrovsky Forwarded on the instructions of V. I. for the attention of Comrade Brichkin, Head of Chancery 28 October, 1919. Urgent Forward to V. V. Vorovsky, V. Bonch-Bruyevich 29 October 1919.

Shortly after this Lenin received Chertkov and discussed the future complete edition of Tolstoy's works with him. In this and other talks he expressed his ideas about the nature of this edition. Bonch-Bruyevich, who was present

¹ V. I. Lenin *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, p. 132.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 16, p. 323.

at Lenin's talk with Chertkov, recalls in his article "Lenin and Culture" that Vladimir Ilyich drew up the programme for the publication of Tolstoy's complete works himself "I frequently heard Vladimir Ilyich say that we must make a careful study of all L. N. Tolstoy's works and, apart from the complete Academy edition, publish many of his stories, articles and extracts as separate brochures and booklets and make them available everywhere in hundreds of thousands of copies among the workers as well as the peasants."¹

Lenin retained this interest in Tolstoy's heritage right up to the end of his life. A member of the staff of the Kremlin Library Sh. Manucharyants, recalls that on December 5, 1921, Vladimir Ilyich asked for Nazhvin's reminiscences about Tolstoy. A note was sent back saying that the library did not have that book, but that it had *Tolstoy's Diary*. Vladimir Ilyich replied to this with a note that read "Comrade Manucharyants! Could you please check. I don't need Tolstoy's 'Diary', I need Nazhvin's reminiscences on Tolstoy published in German in *Tolstoy's Denkwürdigkeiten*."²

The final volume of the *Complete Works* of L. N. Tolstoy was brought out in 1960. Although the editors of this publication departed from the original plan in several volumes, it was a great event in the cultural life of the Soviet people and the world as a whole.

The decree signed by Lenin on the preservation of the artistic treasures and memorials of the past testifies to his concern for the treasures of popular culture. This document expressed the determination of the young government of workers and peasants to make cultural treasures the property of the whole working people. It stated that the loss or theft of cultural treasures would be punishable with the full severity of revolutionary laws.

In the most difficult period of devastation and Civil War, the Soviet state did everything within its power to preserve valuable works of art. In particular, on the initiative and instructions of Lenin the first steps were taken to restore the Kremlin.

On Lenin's orders the Central Restoration Workshops were set up in the Kremlin and set about restoring the unique specimens of early Russian painting in the Kremlin cathed-

¹ *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, January 21, 1940.

² *Reminiscences about Lenin*, Vol. 2, p. 587 (in Russian).

drals The frescoes and icons in the old cathedrals had suffered not only from dirt, dust and damp, but also from unskilled attempts at restoration Lenin followed the work with interest and watched the restorers cleaning later layers off the priceless frescoes by early Russian painters

In 1920 in the course of restoration work they discovered some exquisite icons by the great Russian painter Andrei Rublev of whom Lenin thought most highly which were previously thought to be no longer extant It should be remembered that in the list signed by Lenin of people to whom it was proposed to erect monuments in Moscow and other towns, the first artist to be mentioned was Andrei Rublev

Continuity of progressive traditions is a necessary law of artistic development Literary traditions are firmly consolidated and objectively valuable achievements of the artistic creation of the past, which are used for the further enrichment and development of art in accordance with the current demands and tasks of life

Such an understanding of tradition serves as a scientific precondition for distinguishing the various types of pseudo-innovation from true innovation For Lenin tradition was the necessary aspect, precondition and result of true innovation

The problem of tradition is now attracting considerable attention from theoreticians of literature and the arts it was discussed at the Fifth International Congress on Aesthetics held in Amsterdam in 1954 Even many art historians who inclined towards modernistic views were compelled to acknowledge that it was wrong to oppose tradition to innovation

Soviet literature has immeasurably strengthened and broadened the links between modern artistic creation and the classical heritage In spite of all the false charges levelled against it, the development of Soviet literature testifies clearly that socialist realism more fully than any other literary trend of the past or present assimilated all the truly valuable qualities of the classical heritage Lenin's idea of the need for critical assimilation of artistic wealth accumulated by previous generations is basic in determining the paths of literary development in the period of communist construction In our days the very content of literary traditions has been immeasurably expanded and enriched

In recent years also representatives of modernism in their fight against realism have been using the same post revolutionary arguments as were used by their predecessors in the twenties, declaring all classical values to be the heritage of the bourgeoisie and themselves to be the sole representatives of innovatory, super revolutionary art. The more definitely a writer departs from the main highroads of artistic progress, the more demonstratively he announces his dislike of realism and the progressive heritage of the past. It is significant that the protagonist of the French school of 'literature des choses', Alain Robbe-Grillet, is now accusing realism, particularly socialist realism, of being bourgeois and out-of date. In his speech at a symposium of the European Writers Association in Leningrad and in a number of subsequent public addresses, Robbe-Grillet has unreservedly accused classical realism of being the spiritual bulwark of the bourgeoisie.

He made an even more categorical attack on the supporters of realism in an article entitled 'Literature Persecuted by Politics' (*L'Express*, 1963, No. 11) published after the symposium of the European Writers Association. He attacked those who uphold realism, first and foremost Soviet writers, for showing their solidarity with bourgeois ideologists who defend realistic forms because the latter "embody the golden age of the novel and the paradise of the propertied class." Thus Robbe-Grillet depicts the realist classics as a bulwark of bourgeois life and of the spiritual foundations of the propertied classes. Such arguments bear a remarkable resemblance to the nihilist attacks by the representatives of modernist trends and schools in Soviet literature in the first post Revolution years, which were criticised by Lenin. And the resurrection of these views, which have been refuted by the development of art, merely serves to reveal their true nature, their alienness to the artistic principles of socialism.

The renovation of means of depiction, the search for a new imagery and new artistic devices is a process without which artistic development is inconceivable. But the history of world art shows clearly that no fruitful new form has ever been discovered through rejecting all the old artistic devices. One of the characteristics of the development of artistic form is that it changes not as a result of total rejection, but through continuity, through preserving many earlier ele-

ments, and combination of old and new means of depiction. It is this characteristic of the change of artistic form which makes possible the fusion of traditions with the boldest creative searching and makes new means of portrayal accessible to the masses.

THE NEW MAN

Every new epoch imperiously poses the question of the "new man." The advent of the new period in the emancipation movement brought to the proscenium of history new social forces: the broad popular masses inspired by the ideas of the socialist revolution, and gave rise to the demand for a new type of hero.

This vital question was brought forward with particular force, insistence and acuity in literature after the October Revolution—a crucial turning point in historical development which drastically changed the destiny of mankind. The socialist revolution revealed new ways of forming and developing the individual, led broad sections of the intelligentsia out of the vicious circle of contradictions in which it found itself as a result of the spiritual crisis at the time of the First World War. The sceptic idea of the "lost generation" which found currency in the consciousness of broad intellectual sections was radically discredited and revealed its intellectual and historical barrenness. The revolutionary socialist individuality began to assert itself on a wide scale.

The substance of the process of forming the new, socialist man has been characterised by the classics of scientific socialism as returning man to his human essence. In the early days of the revolution Lenin considered every factory and every village in the land from which the exploiting capitalists and landowners had been "smoked out" as a domain "in which the man of labour can prove his worth, can unbend his back a little, can straighten himself up, can feel himself a man."¹ The cultural revolution, literature and art provided the requisite spiritual conditions for the most successful accomplishment of this process of "straightening up" and renovation, for inner enrichment of the individual.

The task of embodying the figure of the hero of the time,

¹ V. I. Lenin *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 407.

of selecting a harmonious image from the separate facets of the 'human race' during the years immediately following the October Revolution was carried out amidst strenuous creative seeking and attended by a number of failures and extremes. Two one-sided tendencies were clearly felt. The force of inertia led to widespread manifestation of the old individualist approach to the problem of the individual. At the same time one could find at every step the influence of an oversimplified speculative schematic approach which depersonalised man in the stream of abstract revolutionary pathos.

V I Lenin clearly defined the inconsistency of the development of the individual in the historical conditions of the twentieth century. On the one hand, he made a profound study of the phenomena of the spiritual robbing of man by exploiting society, of the impoverishment and standardisation of the individual under the capitalist system.

On the other hand, Lenin set in relief man's spiritual progress, the process of intensive growth of the popular masses' self-awareness as they are drawn on a wide scale into active history making. Lenin could not imagine the growth of the revolutionary movement, the building of socialism, without understanding of the immense changes in the consciousness of the masses.

Substantiating the basic principles of scientific socialism as a counterweight to dehumanising principles, Lenin stressed that the basic law of revolutionary forward development of modern society is that the progress of the individual is an ascending process.

The principal aim of socialism is the all-round development of all man's spiritual capacities. This essence of socialism is revealed in what Lenin said about the time when all conditions will be provided for "ensuring full well-being and free all-round development for *all* members (of society)".¹ To present the ways of forming the character and the destiny of the new man is the central task of revolutionary literature.

The basic theme of Soviet and all progressive modern literature is to assert the spiritual richness of the socialist individuality, its real historical ascending progress in the complex contradictions of our epoch.

¹ V I Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 41, p. 45.

2 Lenin singled out of modern society definite "social types" of the epoch. He pointed out the "sharply delineated types" which were revealed in the process of revolutionary struggle. Every epoch brings forward its social and psychological types. Lenin clearly differentiated in particular the type of the proletarian revolutionary and the type of the petty bourgeois revolutionary.

We must recall that in criticising amorphous revolutionariness and all forms of pseudo revolutionariness, Lenin placed in the historical foreground such genuinely popular heroes as the Bolshevik worker I. V. Babushkin. The basic feature of Babushkin, as of other genuine advanced revolutionaries, is constant, systematic, persistent work to organise and raise the consciousness of the awakening masses of the people.

"They are people," Lenin wrote, "who did not dissipate their energies on the futile terrorist acts of individuals, but who worked persistently and unswervingly among the proletarian masses, helping to develop *their* consciousness, *their* organisation and *their* revolutionary initiative."

"Without such men the Russian people would remain forever a people of slaves and serfs."¹

However Lenin did not accept any and every kind of revolutionariness; he differentiated between the various types and tendencies in the emancipation movement.

Lenin gave a devastating characterisation of revolutionariness of the "workers national-socialist party." For all its external radicalness they capitulated to reaction after the defeat of 1905 Revolution.

Lenin was opposed to all kinds of devotees of sonorous ultra-Left phrases, especially of the anarchist and S-R camps. Characteristic of them was vagueness and vacillation of revolutionary spirit, individualistic incapacity for organisational and educational work with the masses. Hence their propensity to transitions from extreme maximalism to despair and scepticism, generally leading to recreancy and apostasy in the difficult moments of revolutionary development. Instructive in this respect are Lenin's critical appraisals of S-R literature.

Lenin did not accept the type of revolutionary widely represented in literary productions whose characteristic

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 16, p. 364.

feature was abstractness of revolutionary convictions solitude and readiness to sacrifice himself The problem of abstract revolutionariness was posed with extreme acuity at the very beginning of the emancipatory socialist movement Karl Marx and Frederick Engels in their day critically assessed the one-sidedness and in some cases the harmfulness of amorphous, vague revolutionary strivings in the social struggle, notwithstanding the noblest intentions of the exponents of these views Despite his most sincere desire to serve the revolution his capacity to perform individual feats and his hatred of the old system this hero, by virtue of the amorphousness of his revolutionary convictions, was unable to organise the masses and lead them forward, and without their broad participation it was impossible to throw off the yoke of oppression

Lenin was of the opinion that in the conditions of developing class contradictions terrorist acts by isolated individuals were useless, and often harmful, that they steered the people on to the wrong road For that reason he attached particular importance to the struggle against the theories and tactics of the petty bourgeois Leftist groups (Narodists, S-Rs anarchists, and so on) who objectively directed the development of the emancipatory movement along a false road

The question of the type of revolutionary had and still has primary importance in fiction Lenin asserted the type of revolutionary embodying the growing consciousness of the popular masses inspired by the ideas of scientific socialism

Lenin's sympathy was aroused most of all by strong willed, resolute and active characters Especially congenial to him was the new hero, the active revolutionary of the type of Rakhmetov and Volgin, the heroes of Chernyshevsky's novels *What Is to Be Done?* and *Prologue to the Prologue* Heroism, patriotism, dedication to the idea of the people's emancipation, readiness to sacrifice oneself effective activity such were the qualities of these literary heroes Lenin gave a specially high appraisal of Gorky's novel *Mother* which presented for the first time realistic artistic images of conscious revolutionary workers They clearly defined many features of the positive, heroic character which has been so richly embodied and developed in the literature of the present century

The literature of the period of assertion of realism reflects the complexity and variety of characters. But advanced artists are not indifferent to life: they place in the foreground their own ideal first and foremost their new hero, the progressive man of our time.

The advanced literature of every epoch is focussed on embodying the process of forming the new man and reflecting the great variety of characters and destinies. Lenin demanded an extremely differentiated and historically accurate attitude to the formulas concerning the assertion of the personality and the fullness and freedom with which its spiritual content is manifested.

Lenin elucidated all aspects of the general principle of the anti-realist, mystic approach to the nature of society and the individual. This principle consists in substituting for the real character and meaning of phenomena tendentious systems or "models" which do not correspond to the nature of these phenomena. Lenin characterised this method as a general feature of anti-realist consciousness. He wrote that the bourgeois theorists, instead of studying and elucidating social phenomena and the individual only "insinuate into the concept 'society'" ¹ bourgeois ideas. This "insinuating" into the nature of genuine life and man their various own tendentious notions, the striving to "adjust" to them the real variety of reality constitutes the basic principle of anti-realist trends both in the general perception of the world and in the specifics of utilising all the various artistic methods.

An apologia of the petty bourgeois of the sceptic philistine, is often met disguised as defence of the self-worth of the individual. The dispute about the understanding of the individual is known to have been going on for a long time. Marx and Engels in their day revealed the true meaning of numerous reproaches made by reactionary ideologists alleging that socialism, by abolishing philistinism and the omnipotence of private property, also destroys the individual. "You must therefore, confess that by 'individual' you mean no other person than the bourgeois, than the middle-class owner of property. This person must, indeed, be swept out of the way." ²

¹ V. I. Lenin *Collected Works* Vol. 1 p. 145

² Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Moscow, 1967, p. 66

Lenin formulated his attitude to the problem of the "living person", his thought concerning the necessity to adopt a differentiated attitude to words about the rights of the individual, as early as the end of the last century in his polemic with the Narodists. Whereas the Narodist writers placed the "living person" in the centre of social development, considering him outside of history, without any regard for his concrete socio-psychological content, Lenin, on the other hand, insisted on a scientific, concrete historical approach to the problem of the "individual and history". Of particular actuality for solving in literature the problem of embodying the individual, his relationship to society, is Lenin's pronouncement on the necessity for the writer to have for this a "reliable criterion, to deal with really 'living individuals'", with their actual thoughts and feelings. This criterion consists in their "thoughts and feelings being expressed in actions, creating definite social relations.

These words were directed against the unhistorical approach to the concepts "individual" and "living individual". Lenin rejected the replacement of the real image of people by artificial figures. But though you talk of 'living individuals', Lenin objected to the Narodist writers "you actually make your starting point not the living individual with the 'thoughts and feelings actually created by his conditions of life by the given system of relations of production, but a marionette, and stuff its head with your own 'thoughts and feelings'". Naturally, such a pursuit only leads to pious dreams, life passes you by, and you pass life by."¹

The concept "individual" in sociology, philosophy and literature has now become still more contradictory. In modern literature the philistine, the discredited sceptic, sometimes tries under the pretext of defending the interests of the individual, to exclude thinking, creative people from all spheres of life, tries to assert his own spiritual poverty, his monopoly right to represent the new generation. Some literary works present as progressive individuals spiritually poor, dull people. But their common feature—inner poverty—is alien to the genuine progressive hero of our time.

Lenin's views on the paths of development of the spiritual culture of socialism are organically linked with his

¹ V I Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, pp. 408-09.

ideas on the character and destiny of the contemporary man, his present and his future. The problem of the social man has a prominent place in the works of Marx and Engels and other representatives of scientific socialism. But with Lenin the theme of the heroes of the future is elucidated in a new way, and reveals aspects which were formerly unknown. The accomplishment of the Great October Socialist Revolution freed historical forces which had been previously fettered, provided the requisite socio-economic conditions for building socialism, brought mankind's future closer. The revolutionary dream, the socialist ideal, about whose vital necessity Lenin wrote as early as the beginning of the twentieth century, became after 1917 a problem which could be immediately solved in practice. It is therefore legitimate that with Lenin the general problems of culture, which became especially acute after the socialist revolution, always merged with forecasts of future mankind. The problem of society's future is the focal point of the ideological struggle today. Hence the opposing conceptions concerning the society and the man of the future.

During Soviet literature's first years the real countenance of the man of the revolutionary epoch was often replaced by various kinds of abstract systems owing to the fact that a number of authors were far removed from the real historical course of life and submitted themselves to predetermined schemes. As a result literature was full of stereotyped, oversimplified personages having nothing in common with genuine artistic assimilation of the characters to which the revolution gave birth. Lenin's works contain many polemical judgements showing the groundlessness of the speculative construing of the human character. Lenin saw as the principal role of socialism "to educate and school people, give them *all round development* and an *all-round training*, so that they *are able to do everything*"¹. But he ridiculed any kind of speculation, any schematic recipes for representing the figure of the present and future man.

Lenin accompanied his thought about the formation of the future man with the following remark:

"To attempt in practice, today, to anticipate the future result of a fully developed, fully stabilised and constituted, fully comprehensive and mature communism would be like

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 50.

trying to teach higher mathematics to a child of four

"We can (and must) begin to build socialism not with abstract human material or with human material specially prepared by us, but with the human material bequeathed to us by capitalism. True, that is no easy matter, but no other approach to this task is serious enough to warrant discussion.¹

Lenin rejected any mystic vague ideas of society and the individual. In complete accordance with historical reality society and the individual must be considered in their development, their concrete historical mutual relationships, their character and their variety.

The Proletkult theorists, the Futurists and the LEF (Left Front Art) supporters demanded that the realistic representation of man with his individual psyche be replaced by "machinisation" of the hero.² Like many other modernistic trends, they demanded that all art of the past be replaced by "ultra realism" which should be based not on the analysis of types, individual characters (we need "not spontaneously emerging types, not specimens, standards of people, taken from one production situation or another"),³ but on utilitarian, standard, levelled people. Inherent in general in all the anti-realist trends of the time was the tendency towards the abstraction of man, to his dissolution in general schematic definitions.

The cosmic, abstractly schematic infatuation of the poets of the Proletkult, Futurist and a number of other literary groupings stemmed organically from a one-sided approach to the problem of the individual and the social, from an oversimplified understanding of "collectivism". Under the influence of theories far removed from Marxism but built on ultra-left phraseology, all interest in the individual was treated as a manifestation of bourgeois ideology, something alien to socialism. Various forms of false, vulgar collectivism played a big role in spreading erroneous views. Such a one-sided approach to the problem of the individual in revolutionary society was largely due to the complexity of

¹ V. I. Lenin *Collected Works* Vol. 31 p. 50.

² I. Grossman-Roshchin, *The Social Plan of Futurism*, LEF, No. 4, 1923, p. 122 (in Russian).

³ S. Tretyakov, *Speech at the dispute LEF and Marxism*, LEF, No. 4, 1923, p. 214.

the search for the features of the new individuality, of new paths for the young Soviet art. According to such outlooks all that was "individual" was declared to be petty bourgeois and hostile to the collective, the revolutionary.

Such a "machinised" stand limited the creative possibilities of art and led to repetition and uniformity of poetic images.

The experience of Lenin's struggle against dogmatic schematism is highly instructive. It confirms the fictitiousness of the striving for innovation, the vital and aesthetic paucity of theories of art which raise to the absolute the principles of abstract "dematerialisation" or "constructing".

All kinds of schematic constructions which objectively deny the significance of individual heroes are alien to the humanistic traditions of Soviet literature. In genuine art brilliance and depth of socio-historical characterisation are always combined with the wealth and versatility of human content.

The founders of scientific socialism categorically rejected all attempts at depersonalising man, deleting his social attributes and his individuality, no matter what ultra-revolutionary phraseology this was clothed in. They were particularly unfriendly and critical in their attitude towards vulgar schematic interpretations of the question of people's equality under socialism. Marx in his time warned how alien to socialism were the attempts of various philistines and vulgarians to make people colourless, to level them all down to themselves. Such outlooks, "coarse communism", were qualified by Marx as "only a *form of the manifestation of the vileness of private ownership wishing to assert itself as positive community*"¹ "When socialists speak of equality they always mean *social* equality, equality of social status and not by any means the physical and mental equality of individuals"² Lenin affirmed, criticising hostile, vulgar ideas of socialism.

The dissolution of the individual in oversimplified interpretations of the collective was largely to be accounted for in the years immediately following the October Revolution by the striving to merge the individual with the revolution.

¹ *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels on Art*, Vol. 1, p. 247 (in Russian).

² V. I. Lenin *Collected Works*, Vol. 20, p. 146.

ary masses. Such a striving is subjectively quite explainable. But Lenin, notwithstanding all kinds of pseudo-collectivist infatuations, perspicaciously perceived the groundlessness of oversimplified contraposition of the individual to the masses, and showed the possibility that such a one-sided viewpoint would adversely influence the development of man and of culture under socialism.

The rejection of what is individual and the exaltation of impersonality which was typical of the writers and theorists of Proletkult was attended by persistent attempts to create corresponding philosophical and aesthetic concepts. Lenin systematically revealed their objective meaning, uncompromisingly tearing away the envelope of revolutionary phraseology.

The polemic on this question is still going on today, inasmuch as vulgarisers of different shades who confuse the collective with the impersonal reject all rights of the individual. Lenin's views are opposed to oversimplified ideas of the development of history rejecting the significance of individual features, characters, destinies, strivings and passions of heroes and dissolving the individual in a stream, levelled by fate, of the movement of the masses. According to Lenin the mighty stream of historical movement necessarily provides room for highly varied individualities, impulses, attractions and interests. "An excellent picture of history," reads an excerpt made by Lenin from Hegel's book *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, "the sum of individual passions, actions, etc. (everywhere something akin to ourselves, and therefore everywhere something that excites our interest for or against'), sometimes the mass of some general interest, sometimes a multitude of *minute forces* (an infinite exertion of minute forces which produce a tremendous result from what appears insignificant)"¹

Unacceptable to Lenin were any signs of levelling the individual, of ignoring man's historical and individual variety. Lenin's views arm us against all sorts of tendencies to oversimplification and schematisation of man's character.

Lenin's works provide the key for correctly solving the acute and vitally important problem, upon which art is

¹ V I Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol 38, pp 309-10

always focussed, of the versatility and the inner content of the individuality and the correlation between the social and other aspects of man's spiritual nature

Let us recall Lenin's remarkable words about the character of the new man, about the fundamental basis of society's transition to communism. Lenin associates the advent of communism with people's having become gradually accustomed to observe the elementary rules of communal life that have been known for centuries and have been repeated in all that has been written over thousands of years, to observe them without violence, without coercion, without any subordination, without any special coercive organs to which we give the name of the state. Lenin clearly spoke about the necessity for transforming all man's spiritual facets, not only his consciousness, i.e., a definite system of attractions, habits and instincts. The implementation of communism, the withering away of the state and the coercive organs is possible only when new standards have penetrated into the deepest realms of man's psyche.

The heroes of Maxim Gorky, M. Sholokhov, L. Tolstoy, and A. Fadeyev and their relations are vitally convincing since we can see in relief in them all the stimuli of their actions, both conscious and instinctive. We always see in them living human nature as it is in itself. And on the contrary, any trace of levelling gives man a one-sided, impoverished character, schematising his interests and his actions. Such works leave us indifferent because the motives and stimuli in them are purely a matter of the brain, of reason, discounting all the other aspects of man's nature, his emotions, his individual inclinations.

It is a sad thing but we still come across survivals in practice of oversimplified ideas on the creation of characters in art, the tendency to reduce them to schematic elements. The survivals of such views sometimes infiltrate still into the theory and practice of art and it is still an urgent task of our criticism to fight them.

The embodiment of the man of our time, especially of those who form the vanguard of the people, presupposes a rich artistic arsenal of philosophical, aesthetical and expressive means, mastery in depicting man's social and inner life. In art it is not enough to "find" a universal type. The image of a man cannot be successfully achieved without reproducing the peculiarities of his intellect and his psychol

ogy, the complexity of his interrelations in social and individual life, the complexity and variety of his experience. It is necessary to penetrate deep into his spiritual world, to find vigorous and exact words to generalise the features of the individual of our time and make them tangible.

As a rule, the supporters of modern "myth making" argue that the complexity of the modern individual and the whole world make artistic embodiment difficult. On this plea they renounce altogether any artistic cognition of man and the whole of reality. Instead of the concrete realities of life they make up a scheme, a model of the world and of modern man, models which in reality are nothing but schemes and models of their own subjective perception of reality. To them man and the world seem chaotic, absurd and unknowable. For this reason they most often model the world and the personages of their works as embodiments of chaos, foredoom, irrationality.

The preaching of the "universality", the "integration" of the individual has a long history. Different versions of man's universality arise from the very substance of capitalist property-owning relations, which level man and alienate him from his own individuality. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels wrote about man's integration, the deletion of his individuality, his individual qualities and strivings, resulting from the domination of material things. Deliverance from the yoke of capitalist relations does away with the causes of people's levelling and the suppression of their individual specifics. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels associated the socialist transformation of the world with the spiritual emancipation, the "reintegration of the individual". They saw society's movement towards communism as the "reintegration of man, or his return to himself, as the destruction of human self-alienation".¹

The spirit of "universal" unification pervades all the most recent sociological, economical and philosophical theories connected with the concept of "integration" of the modern individuality. Among them a great role is played by the theory of 'stages' in the single world historical process of W. Rostow, which he expounded in his *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge,

¹ 1. K. Marx, F. Engels *From Early Works* Moscow 1956 p. 588 (in Russian).

1960) In his view the single social development of the whole world will in the end bring all countries, irrespective of the specifics of their economic system, to the establishment of a single type of industrial society

'Universal', general', "integrated" individuality, these are the most fashionable and most current terms defining the ideas of fairly wide intellectual circles abroad concerning the decisive radical shifts in the consciousness of modern man. These concepts are repeated in various forms in hundreds of books and articles

For all their variety, the views concerning the spiritual progress of the modern individual all gravitate round two most characteristic concepts. On the one hand, the spiritual progress of the individual is considered as being completely alienated from society, from ideas and from moral standards, within the absolute limitation of his own secluded "hermetic" individuality. In literature this outlook is expressed most fully in the various forms of existentialism. On the other hand, in connection with the gigantic discoveries in science and technology, wide currency has been given to the conception of the complete dissolution of the individual in the human stream. Closest to these ideas are works of the intellectualistic type which disregard embodiment of the world of things and are orientated on reproducing abstract inner substances

In the conception of the "universal" and the "integrated" man the proposition concerning the "single culture" of a single industrial society plays an essential role. By "single culture" is understood here not the union of all the progressive humanistic elements of culture, but the complete acceptance of the spiritual standards of the capitalist world

The theory of "integration" of the modern individual arises also as a result of a number of other causes. One of these is the assumption that the organisation of modern production and technology leads to the unification of people's characters and of countries. According to these notions production forces people, irrespective of their social and individual specifics, to unite in approximately the same kind of collectives, channelling their thinking and actions in a definite direction and allegedly giving rise to a universal system of thinking and feeling. This conception has already received its definition in philosophy and sociology abroad

in the term "causal mechanical world outlook" It is thus assumed that mankind is at present moving towards the liquidation of individual peculiarities and the worth of the human individual

Modern views concerning the progress of the individual present a rather checkered picture Nevertheless the outlooks counterposed to the socialist ideology, for all their ramifications, are united by a general all pervading tendency to level and "naturalise" man The real general meaning of the "universal", "integrated", "natural", and "cybernetised" individual lies in the tendency to free the individuality from ideas, from individual variety, in the return to a kind of naturalness of psychophysical or abstractly levelled primordality, to simplification of its spiritual content

All the different tendencies towards unification of man and art in our day are a sign of spiritual regression Irrespective of the personal motives of those authors who exclude the human character from literature or deliberately debase it, the dehumanising tendencies are objectively counterposed to the revolutionary processes of our time, to its historically onward movement, the first sign of which is the awakening of the popular masses, the struggle against dehumanisation, for one's place in life, a place worthy of man.

* * *

In his socio philosophical views, Lenin, proceeding from a scientific analysis of the contradictions of modern society, revealed the presence in it of confronting forces in struggle With the help of Lenin's views on the contradictoriness of social development it is possible to understand more correctly the problem of "alienation" as a result of a number of social causes which have been placed in the foreground of modern literary discussions

By the term "alienation" Marx understood the manifestation of one of the concrete contradictions of bourgeois civilisation Social relations, according to Marx, as a result of the domination of property relations, appear to individuals not as their own relations, but as a certain alien power standing above them, about whose origin and development tendencies they know absolutely nothing, and which exists by virtue of its own mysterious laws And this mysterious

force fatally rules over people, directs their acts, decides their fate. The Marxist understanding of alienation reveals the true basis of this phenomenon in life, a basis which often switches the individual out of his real relations into the plane of the fantastic.

Alienation of the individual, despite all the significance of this phenomenon, is but one of the aspects of social life. There is no justification for the striving to present "alienation" as a universal, determinant process embracing all sections and aspects of the life of mankind today. Supporters of this view lose sight of the real processes opposing "alienation" — the heroic activity of people who strive to know the laws of life and to direct them, to know the secrets of history. An explanation of the many-sidedness of the historical process may be obtained with the help of Lenin's statement that property divides while socialism unites millions of people. The division of people by the domination of private property is the real socio-economic basis of alienation. Socialism creates the vital premises for overcoming alienation. For all its pitiless truthfulness to life, the progressive literature of the past and the present reproduces not only the destruction of the individual, but also the process of man's spiritual awakening, the activation of revolutionary creative principles in him, the capacity for actively transforming reality.

"Alienation" is far from accounting for all the facets of the individuality in bourgeois society, it characterises only one aspect of its contradictory development. Lenin rejected the views of the Narodists and other anti-historical notions which noted only the oppression and disintegration of the individual in the capitalist epoch. Lenin also singled out in that period the "general heightening of the sense of individuality", "a heated literary war against senseless medieval restrictions on the individual".¹ According to Lenin's thinking, it was precisely capitalist Russia after the reform that brought this heightening of the sense of individuality, "it was capitalism alone that created the conditions which made possible this protest of the individual".²

Exposing the supporters of "firm rule" who were accusing the "street" of ignorance, Lenin stated in 1901: "Under

¹ V. I. Lenin *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 414.

² *Ibid.*, p. 415.

the pressure of circumstances, the government in the latter half of the nineteenth century was compelled to come into contact with the 'street', but the character of the street changed with astonishing rapidity and the ignorant inhabitants gave place to citizens who were beginning to understand their rights and who were capable even of producing the champions of their rights.¹

The heightening of the sense of individuality, the feeling of one's own dignity which began at the dawn of bourgeois society, with the course of history and the growth of its revolutionary forces acquired by our time still greater scope and penetrated deep into the consciousness of the people at large. Those points of view which reduced the whole life of the individual in bourgeois society to its merely being repressed by unsurmountable hostile forces were assessed by Lenin as one-sided or reactionary in their objective essence.

One must not overlook the active, creative people to whom all inner devaluation is alien and who are capable of fighting in the most difficult circumstances, are capable of heroism, are not reconciled with evil and have not accepted its causes as century-old unknown unsurmountable forces fatally predetermining destinies, and still less as being rooted in the very nature of man. Were they not so, these people would not have been able to participate in the great battles of the epoch, they would not have contributed to the creative activity of their time.

* * *

The most basic feature of Soviet literature is its clearly expressed heroic principle. This principle came to our literature with the revolution and the building of socialism, along with the new characters and the new life of the Soviet country. It reflects the basic distinctive feature of the people's self-consciousness and accomplishment.

There is no need to quote here Lenin's numerous utterances about the outstanding heroism of the revolutionary people which was so vigorously manifested in October 1917, in the fighting against the whiteguards and the forces of international imperialism, and in the work to create a new life. This theme runs through all Lenin's works and speeches in

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, p. 393.

the Soviet period. The heroism of the revolutionary popular masses and their new moral qualities were considered by Lenin as the most important motive force of their conscious creation of history. And it is natural that the young Soviet literature was distinguished by its heroic pathos. It was expressed most fully in the best works at the beginning of the history of Soviet literature: *The Iron Flood* by A. Serafimovich, *Chapayev* by D. Furmanov, *The Fall of Daur* by A. Malyskin, and D. Bedny's and V. Mayakovsky's poetry.

When speaking of the complex process of assimilation of the new life, of the heroic principle in the first years of Soviet literature, it would be unhistorical to overlook the truly immense stream of imperfect works, often naive in their form but full of enthusiasm, which were produced by workers, peasants and Red Army men who wished to convey their dedication to the revolution in their verse, stories, essays and plays. Many of these works have not stood the test of time and are now forgotten. But there is no disputing the fact that they should go down in history as unforgettable documents of their time, as the real living emotional environment, as manifestations of the stream of artistic creation called forth by the revolution. In the bed of this stream were conceived and grew the classical productions of Soviet literature which absorbed, as it were, synthesised the best creative strivings of their epoch.

A most careful study of this stream of mass creative work arising from the deep revolutionary feeling of the fighting people is a necessary task in the history of Soviet literature. It reflects the unique colouring and spirit of the period which was the life-giving soil out of which grew the seeking for the new and the highest achievements of the Soviet epoch. The unique force of these ingenuous, sincere, usually outspokenly political works was felt by many great masters of literature of the older generation who keenly felt their separation from the life of people and sought ways of renovating art. A. Blok and A. Tolstoi, for example, "envied the broad direct influence exerted by the writers born of the revolution on the masses, the depth to which their works penetrated people's hearts, their ability to rouse their readers to fight and accomplish feats."

The heroic pathos of life in the revolutionary epoch found brilliant artistic expression in many subsequent works of Soviet literature. 11

After the stream of ingenuous, mostly professionally poor works in which the heroic revolutionary principle appeared in the form of direct agitation, the young Soviet literature produced a number of outstanding works in which this theme was treated on the philosophical, aesthetic and artistic planes in all its complexity and earned a place among the higher intellectual seekings of the period. Maxim Gorky, who initiated the revolutionary heroic theme at the very beginning of the century, developed it in a new way in the Soviet period of his work, synthesising the immense world experience in his most "critical" monumental work *The Life of Klim Samgin*. The philosophy of the heroism of life is creatively realised in this work by embodying all the complex intertwining of social and spiritual life of the period. And the words which an unknown *muzhik* shouted to Klim Samgin, who longed at the bottom of his heart to bar the way to the masses of people crowding to the Finnish railway station in Petersburg on the historical evening of 1917 to meet Lenin devastating words which sound as the sentence of history "Get out! Get out of the way, you cockroach!" seem to be addressed to the modern supporters of the "deheroisation", dwarfing and degeneration of the individual.

Looking into the past and the present of Soviet literature, Konstantin Fedin accurately qualified its general striving as 'heroic morality'. The heroic principle, many times confirmed by history, is the determining quality of the advanced people of our revolutionary time and of the entire philosophical and aesthetical pathos of Soviet literature.

Deheroisation of the individual is one of the main propositions of present-day anti-socialist conceptions. Such conceptions are based on the tendentious opinion that in view of the complexity of modern life torn by contradictions, there cannot be any harmonious heroic characters, inasmuch as ambition, egotism, greed and many other negative features of the individual are unsurmountable, rooted in man's very nature. In many literary works abroad we note the false understanding of the heroic: the high moral demand in them is considered as something heartless, inhuman, cruel.

And on the contrary, condescension, a forgiving attitude to all kinds of anti-social, immoral actions is considered an

expression of humaneness, kindness, the humanity of progress

The anti-socialist ideologists of our days generally treat the heroic in contemporary, especially Soviet, literature with scepticism or irony, but always adversely. They interpret it as something artificial, as a speculative category allegedly contrary to truth and embellishing life. In this way the immense social and ethic content of the concept "heroic", its real meaning in the life of modern mankind, is concealed by every possible means. By force of prejudice or by some amazing lowering of the level of thinking the supporters of "deheroisation" try to delete the outstanding pages in the history of man's spiritual seeking, to close their eyes to the great history of the concept "heroic", to the constant attention paid to it by the most prominent artists and thinkers in particular Goethe, Hegel, Balzac, Rolland and Gorky.

Literary criticism has as yet given little consideration to the forms in which the heroic is manifested in life and art. Not unfrequently the heroic principle in literature is seen in a one-sided way, only as the direct accomplishment of a feat in battle or in some exceptional circumstances. The everyday on the other hand irrespective of time and place, is considered as being far from heroic, as low, dull, bereft of any great scope or romantic pathos.

Lenin immensely broadened the idea of the heroic, of its nature and manifestations. He expressed his views on the subject in polemics with narrow, one-sided opinions. Immediately after the socialist revolution and in the early twenties wide currency was given in literary circles to the dangerous understanding of the heroic only as an exterior spectacular military episode, without going deep into the impulse behind the feat. Many writers blind to the heroic principle in the everyday labour of millions categorically denied its presence in the Soviet reality and in their works constantly expressed regret at the irrecoverable loss of the lofty heroism of the Civil War, its replacement by dull, prosaic, everyday routine. Lenin revealed the falsity of these views and immensely enriched the concept of the heroic, showed the great variety of its manifestations, and gave it a new and higher meaning.

In defining the pathos of formation of the young Soviet literature the problem of the mutual relations between the heroics of the revolutionary outburst and the everyday work

of building the new society was particularly timely and acute Lenin rejected the one-sided oversimplified interpretation of this question which was often enough expressed in literature In revealing the true complexity of history, Lenin steered writers towards reproducing the concrete processes of the period in images and affirmed the necessity for understanding the specifics of the different periods of time the real interest of the epoch of great leaps, which is that history knows moments when the most important thing for the success of the revolution is to heap up as large a quantity of the fragments as possible, i.e., to blow up as many of the old institutions as possible, moments arise when enough has been blown up and the next task is to perform the 'prosaic' (for the petty bourgeois revolutionary, the boring) task of clearing away the fragments, and moments arise when the careful nursing of the rudiments of the new system, which are growing amidst the wreckage on a soil which as yet has been badly cleared of rubbish, is the most important thing ¹

The armed struggle is succeeded by the matter of building, a matter which is inevitably slower and more gradual, this follows from the essence of economic work as compared with military, administrative and general political work, it follows from its particular difficulty and its deeper 'soil' as Lenin put it. Here, Lenin explained, the heroism of an isolated spurt was absolutely not enough, what was needed was the most lasting, the most persistent, the most difficult heroism of mass, everyday work Lenin insisted that "Those who find this work dull", 'uninteresting and unintelligible', those who turn up their noses or become panic-stricken, or who become intoxicated with their own declamations about the absence of the 'previous elation, the previous enthusiasm, etc., had better be relieved of their jobs' and given a back seat, so as to prevent them from causing harm ²

Let us recall that in the early twenties sentiments of disarray, lack of understanding of the essence of the new economic policy of the Soviet state appeared in some literary circles. This was expressed by unjustified counterposition of the romanticism of war to the everyday work of con-

¹ V I Lenin *Collected Works* Vol 27, pp 273-74

² *Ibid*, Vol 33, pp 28-29

struction, by panicky hysterics because of the degeneration of the revolution

Lenin pointed out that, alongside the heroism of armed struggle for the independence and freedom of the fatherland, there is also the heroism of the everyday mass creative work of millions. And there is no reason for opposing to one another these different forms of heroism which mutually nurture and reinforce each other.

The heroic principle in literature is beyond doubt much broader than the direct depicting of the accomplishment of a feat, it is reflected in the country's everyday activity and its whole spiritual atmosphere. The heroic appears as a particular feature of the moral countenance and the whole spiritual essence of man, making him capable of military and labour feats for his country.

Lenin's definition of the "soil" accurately conveys the specific features of everyday creative heroism. Only the constant and heroic work of millions of people creates what is great on earth, is the motive power of life and of history. And the embodiment of this essence of socialist life acquires, with the advance of time, growing significance and constitutes the inner essence of socialist art.

The clear and brilliant way in which Lenin poses the question of the necessity for asserting the progressive phenomena in life, of providing the people with images lighting the road ahead, gives us the key for solving many modern problems in artistic creation. It is quite natural that the problem of the heroic and the ordinary is at the present time one of the most urgent and is in the focal point of literary discussions. Unfortunately, during the course of creative discussions, a one-sided tendency has been manifested on the part of some men of letters to deny the heroic, to declare that it is pure rhetoric, and so on. These tendencies have already been criticised in the Soviet press. However, attention must be directed to the attempts made by the supporters of the "earthly" art to interpret in a distorted fashion the very nature of the heroic in Soviet literature. They try to convince us that the embodiment of what is heroic and elevated in the life of the Soviet people requires that only outstanding individuals, exceptional, out-of-the-common run events should be depicted, while the ordinary and every day must be renounced. Such fictions have nothing in common with the truth.

Lenin directed the attention of writers first and foremost to the life of the millions of ordinary working people. He discredited the theory of the "hero" and the "mob" and defined the new nature of heroism in socialist society. The grandeur of the socialist ideal grows up out of the movements of the masses themselves, conveys the beauty of the people's soul, struggle and labour. The fundamentally new quality of the creators of socialism is defined in great relief in Lenin's statement that, in connection with the development of the revolution "from the ranks of the workers and peasants nameless heroes are emerging, people fused with the mass and ever more deeply imbued with a noble obsession to liberate the people"¹

The correctness of this proposition is confirmed not only by the experience of the socialist revolution, but also by the many years of experience in building socialist society.

The version alleging that heroic pathos is alien to the everyday life of rank and file people is therefore imaginary and contrary to the historically formed character of Soviet literature, which shows people both accomplishing outstanding feats and in their ordinary everyday life. In accordance with the truth of reality Soviet writers bring out the heroic meaning of the customary activity of ordinary people.

Gorky proclaimed as the chief hero of the modern drama the progressive man who is the motive force of his time, "Man with a capital letter." "The historical but fantastic man," he said, "Man with a capital letter, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, decisively and for ever struck out of life the type of the comforter, replacing him with the teacher of the revolutionary right of the working class. It is this teacher, this man of action, this builder of the new world who must be the chief hero of the modern drama."²

Lenin's works clearly trace the character of the new man of socialist society flaring the path into the future. In his speeches and writings during the Soviet period, Lenin said a particularly great lot about the ordinary rank and file man's new features born of the revolution, about the changes in the character of the popular masses. He pointed out that the revolutionary epoch has given life to a truly stormy,

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 9, p. 223.

² M. Gorky, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 426 (in Russian).

historical process of the growth of consciousness, initiative and energy, an unprecedented broadening of the spiritual horizon of the ordinary man, representative of the masses. This constant thought of Lenin's supplies the answer to many urgent questions concerning the development of contemporary literature.

The champions of the "ordinariness", the "earthiness" of literature arguing in favour of detail, against heroic pathos, practically exclude the main aspect of the life of Soviet people from the sphere of literature. Characteristic of the practice of these supporters is partiality for depicting disorders and mistakes in everyday life which generally have a morbid effect on the fate of the heroes. Indeed there are still all kinds of morbid phenomena in life, and it is necessary to write about them. But the exclusion of the heroic principle from the field of art results in an impoverished and one-sided picture of reality. In order to understand the proportion of the heroic and all kinds of mistakes and dramas in Soviet society, it is useful to remember what Lenin said in 1918: "For every hundred mistakes we commit, and which the bourgeoisie and their lackeys shout about to the whole world, 10,000 great and heroic deeds are performed, greater and more heroic because they are simple and inconspicuous amidst the everyday life of a factory district or a remote village, performed by people who are not accustomed (and have no opportunity) to shout to the whole world about their successes."¹

Lenin's defence of art, the bearer of progressive social ideals, is instructive today too, when reactionary literature openly attacks heroic characters. Reactionary writers cannot show the people any positive heroes, convincing examples worthy of imitation. This is borne out by many admissions of foreign critics and artists. It is understandable, as the whole nature of reactionary man hating ideology is hostile to genuine morality and heroism.

The triumph of socialism in the land of the Soviets radically transformed the lives of the people, broadening to an immeasurable degree their social and spiritual horizons. This decisive historical process became the principal and all pervading theme of Soviet literature.

¹ V I Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol 28 p 72



The Leninist principles for the development of art envisage the most favourable conditions possible for discovering and promoting artistic talent

Lenin's ideas on ways of developing Soviet literature presuppose an organic fusion of lofty ideas with the full development of the artist's individual features, creative aspirations, and ideals

In Lenin's judgement, the widespread assimilation of the cultural treasures of the past, apart from its direct significance, is a solid foundation for the development of true artistic innovation of the revolutionary epoch. In Lenin's aesthetic views prominence is given to the dialectical nature of the relationship between tradition and innovation, between the art of the past and that of the present

During one conversation, Lenin, after listening attentively to Lunacharsky's ideas on ways of developing Soviet art, observed that it was essential, while preserving the artistic treasures of the past, not to forget "to support the new that was born under the influence of the revolution. Never mind if it was weak at first it must not be judged from the aesthetic point of view alone, otherwise the old more mature art would retard the development of the new, and though this old art itself would undergo a change the process would be the slower the less vigorously it was spread on by the competition offered by its young rival." "Well then to sum up," I said (A. V. Lunacharsky V. S.), "everything that is more or less sound in old art is to be safeguarded. Art I do not mean museum pieces, but effective art such as the theatre, literature and music is to be influenced but not crudely, to complete its evolution as quickly as possible to meet the new requirements. New trends are to be treated with discrimination. They must not be allowed to seize the field by mere aggression, but are to be given the opportunity to win prominence by real artistic merits. In this respect, they are to be given every possible assistance."

"To this Lenin said. This puts it rather precisely, I think. Now try to bring it home to our audiences, and to people in general for that matter, in your public speeches and articles."¹

¹ V. I. Lenin on Literature and Art, p. 261

The viability of Lenin's ideas on a sensitive, but judicious, approach to the new trends in art and on determining their position by real artistic merit, has been borne out by the whole history of Soviet literature and art.

The art of the future, according to Lenin, is least of all dependent on its being modelled after some ready made and congealed pattern. There is something comical and essentially bigoted about the attempts of certain contemporary critics to canonise, as a prototype of the art of the future, a narrow range of external attributes such as "expressiveness", "laconicism", and so forth. In the sum total of Lenin's judgements, the art of the future is seen, in the clarity of its fundamental principles, as being in a permanent state of development, of creative quest for new paths.

Lenin taught how to find and give patient encouragement to artistic talent. He displayed human warmth and concern in his dealings with budding authors. In 1911, he wrote to Gorky "do reply to the workers at our school. They are good fellows. One of them is a poet, and keeps writing verses, but the poor chap has no guide, helper, instructor or adviser."¹

Lenin's interest in aspiring authors always took practical form. Just how much significance he attached to discovering and encouraging new talent among the people is shown by the fact that he usually forwarded the countless works by young writers for comment by qualified men of letters, although the latter might be heavily burdened with state and social duties, or with their own writing. On Lenin's instructions, the efforts of aspiring authors were reviewed by Lunacharsky, A. Voronsky, and other well known figures in the literary world.

Lenin's concern for the development of young writers was combined with a demand for honest comment on their work, since he always categorically rejected any attempts to distort or prettify the position, or to "stoop" to the level of the immature person. Knowing how exacting Lenin could be, the reviewers wrote their reviews without making any allowances.

Lenin's sensitive, yet exacting treatment of young writers set a precedent for guiding the activities of Soviet literary organisations, journals, publishing houses and

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works* Vol. 38, p. 179

newspapers Every opportunity has been created for the unfolding of talent and the development of young creative powers Almost every year, Soviet literature becomes the richer for gifted new writers, encouraged by the inburst of the reading public, the first, sometimes still hesitant steps in literary work become firmer, more brisk, more confident, and the self imposed standards more exacting And an author, formerly unknown, writes works which bring him not just prestige, but nation wide recognition and respect

Lenin used to affirm that more scope must be allowed in creative work for the artist's personal initiative and individual inclinations, there must be more scope, too, for reflection and fantasy, for variety of form and content But this does not mean giving up guidance of socialist art "We must not," he said 'stand with our arms folded and let chaos develop at will We must guide this process in accordance with a proper programme and shape the results'¹

Lenin's principles of Party guidance of art have nothing in common with paternalism, control, petty interference in the creative process, or with speculative and dogmatic restrictions of any kind Leninist guidance of art consists first and foremost in the ability to arm its practitioners with progressive ideas which will help them to understand properly the complex processes of reality and to give convincing answers to the most vital, urgent and complex problems facing society and the artist, answers based on a thorough knowledge of life and the laws of artistic craftsmanship It is in this way that the Party gives direction to creative activity

The Party's Leninist policy resolutely cut across the vulgar sectarian tendencies in literature which were leading to the disunity of creative forces and were interfering with the education and solidarity of the writers themselves

The subsequent achievements of Soviet literature and art testify to the fruitfulness of Lenin's principles which guarantee the most favourable conditions possible for the full and free development of creative talent This has been acknowledged by many distinguished progressive writers all over the world

¹ V I Lenin on Literature and Art p 659 (in Russian)

ART BELONGS TO THE PEOPLE

Outlining the characteristics of a free literature in socialist society, Lenin defined its position as one of open and conscious service to the people. Art, said Lenin, belongs to the people, and it must send its roots deep down among the masses. In Lenin's conception all the best achievements of man's artistic genius will serve, not a spoilt upper stratum of society but millions of working people. Lenin's programme stresses not only the right of the working people to possess the treasures of art, but the necessity for art to be linked with life, with the aspirations of the masses and to be a living depository, a crucible of popular, historical, general and individual experience. This concentrated interpretation in images of the people's destiny can serve as an inexhaustible source for the spiritual enrichment of people and as an effective means of shaping the personality.

Lenin thought it imperative that an author should write for the people and strive for access to their hearts. Lenin himself was an example of such an attitude to the reader. After one of his speeches Clara Zetkin, deeply impressed by its simplicity and clarity, approached him and said:

"Listen Comrade Lenin, in our country the chairman of some plain little meeting in a plain little provincial town would be afraid to talk as simply and unpretentiously as you. He would be scared of seeming 'not sufficiently educated'. I can only compare your art of talking with one thing: the great art of Tolstoi. You have the same powerful, integral, finished approach: the same unerring sense of the truth. And that has beauty. Is it, perhaps, a typical feature of the Slavonic temperament?"

"I don't know," replied Lenin. "All I know is that whenever I have spoken—in the capacity of orator—I have always thought of the workers and peasants as my audience. I wanted them to understand me."¹

To belong to the people literature does not have to lower its artistic standards "for accessibility's sake." Lenin taught that it is essential to raise the cultural, and consequently the artistic, standards of the masses. Lenin regarded any

¹ Clara Zetkin, *Reminiscences of Lenin*, Moscow, 1955, p. 32 (in Russian).

simplification and lowering of standards in literature for the people's sake as harmful and unnecessary

Affirming that art was for the people, Lenin distinguished sharply between popularity and flirting with the undeveloped reader. The popularity of a work consists in its accessibility to the masses, which means simplicity and truth. "The popular writer," said Lenin, "does not presuppose a reader that does not think, that cannot or does not wish to think, on the contrary, he assumes in the undeveloped reader a serious intention to use his head and *aids* him in his serious and difficult work, leads him, helps him over his first steps, and teaches him to go forward independently. The vulgar writer assumes that his reader does not think and is incapable of thinking."¹ Lenin considered that any lowering of demands on literature was harmful and unnecessary, debasing it to the level of "gutter writing." An unfinished article of Lenin's about the journal *Svoboda* (Freedom) is of inestimable value as a statement of his views on this subject. It contains a well aimed attack on literary oversimplification in every kind of writing. "*Svoboda* is a worthless little rag. Its author, indeed, this is precisely the impression it creates, that one person has written it all, from beginning to end, claims to write popularly 'for the workers.' But what we have here is not popularisation, but talking down in the worst sense of the term. There is not one simple word, everything is twisted. The author cannot write a single phrase without embellishments, without popular similes and 'popular catchwords such as theirs. Outworn socialist ideas are chewed over in this ugly language without any new data, any new examples, any new analysis, and the whole thing is deliberately vulgarised."²

Lenin was embarrassed by affectation, by any kind of flirtation with the undeveloped reader. Not to sink to the level of the uneducated, not to encourage his backwardness, but patiently and exactly to guide him towards profound ideas, to raise the level of his general and artistic development: this was the path that Lenin pointed out to the writers.

Lenin vigorously objected to any form of surrogate being used instead of genuine art, which he regarded as more than

¹ V. I. Lenin *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, p. 311

² *Ibid*

merely a matter of pleasant entertainment " Our workers and peasants," he affirmed, " have received the right to real great art That is why we are giving first priority to the widest possible popular education and upbringing It prepares the soil for culture of course, on condition that the grain problem is solved And on this soil there should grow a really new and great communist art which will create a form corresponding to its content ¹

The spirit and meaning of the traditions created by Lenin in the approach to the problems of art consist primarily in that the treasures of all artistic culture should be made the property of the working people on the widest possible scale But hitherto, the theories on this subject have been primarily concerned with art as intended for the people Hitherto, the concept "popularity" has been taken to mean primarily the comprehensibility factor in works of art

The result is that another vital aspect of this matter, which was also stressed by Lenin, has been most unjustifiably relegated to the background and has not been receiving the attention it deserves and that is the task of general cultural development, aesthetic education, of improvement in the people's ability to respond to works of art Lenin firmly insisted on the necessity for raising the spiritual and aesthetic level of the consumer in art and on the inadmissibility of lowered criteria, of descending to backward and uniform tastes

Art, as a special form of human activity, exerts its influence on the general development of man and helps him improve his aesthetic responsiveness This process of mutual enrichment stimulates the ability of people to create according to the "laws of beauty", to transcend their immediate utilitarian needs

According to Lenin, the realisation of the people's right to real and great art is far removed from an ineffectual lowering of consumer standards to the level of the more backward tastes The fusion of culture with the spiritual life of the people is inconceivable without the development of their aesthetic needs and tastes Referring to the inability of each and every one of us to understand some literary works, Lenin explained " You should not be perturbed if on reading this

¹ *V I Lenin on Literature and Art*, p 662 (in Russian)

work you do not understand it at once Very few people do But returning to it later, when your interest has been aroused, you will succeed in understanding the greater part, if not the whole of it "¹

Other representatives of Marxist thought also drew attention to the significance of an active effort in the understanding of works of artistic value The comprehension of major and complex works of art demands a definite inner preparation, a concentration of thought, feeling and imagination Only light matter comes easily without inner effort "Mastery of expression," observed Lunacharsky, "does not coincide with so-called easy reading Strictly speaking, not a single great artist can be superlatively easy to follow, that is, can produce works which the public can grasp without effort . . the author who writes a book which can be understood *without any difficulty whatever* is a representative of light reading the master who writes a book does so to elevate the reader, to make him stronger and wiser in some degree "

The problem of the reader's or the spectator's perception of a work of art is becoming increasingly urgent and deserves thoroughgoing analysis The power, or impact, of an artistic image is in many respects determined not only by the content put into it by the author, but by the individual nature of the reader's own understanding of it The perception of Hamlet, Faust, Onegin, Pechorin, Dmitri Karamazov, Samgin or Melekhov is far from identical with different people, and depends on the way in which their understanding has been developed

These qualities do not occur automatically The reader's aesthetic taste and criteria develop and come to him to conform with the highest artistic standards prevalent at that time On the other hand, if the reader's taste has been formed under the influence of cut price commercial goods, he will find himself ill-adapted to appreciating the true riches of art One of the most fatal causes of mental impoverishment is the soul-destroying and stupefying influence of a stream of mass-produced pseudo-culture products

The development of life brings the ever firmer rejection of the abstract, non historical approach to the problems of people's inner life and to the cultural shape of Soviet society

¹ V I Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol 29, p 473.

Lenin frequently drew attention to the spiritual differentiation in society, the disparate cultural levels of the people. The actual development of life has confirmed the untenability, in examining cultural problems, of proceeding from some "average", abstract notion of the people's cultural condition and their need for spiritual development. So abstract an approach to defining the level, criteria and tasks of this development hinders the correct and sober interpretation and solution of the contradictions in cultural life.

In the years of socialist construction, great cultural progress has been achieved in Soviet society. Nevertheless, the development of the spiritual life creates its own contradictions, and these are not being investigated on anything like the scale desirable. One of the most important of these contradictions is the frequently observed disparity between the demands which socialism makes of man's spiritual make-up, and the insufficiently high level of development reached by individual members of Soviet society.

Discrepancies in the general cultural and aesthetic development are in evidence everywhere, and they are one of the very real contradictions in the development of socialist culture. It is pointed out in the press, and with every justification, that a first rate feature film often passes unnoticed by the public, while, on the contrary, certain mass produced, entertaining, so-called "commercial" films enjoy wide popularity. A performance by a second rate variety orchestra sometimes causes a sensation, whereas a tour by a really outstanding musician does not excite anything like the same general interest.

In dealing with the "culture and the people" problem, to concentrate on the comprehensibility of works of art to the mass public as a criterion would considerably delay society's aesthetic development, and would bring to a halt the inner enrichment of the more advanced sections of society.

Consequently, the principle of the comprehensibility of the arts to all sections of the population must of necessity be combined with exacting criteria in the sphere of the spiritual life, and in socialist culture, with intensive day by-day endeavours to raise the spiritual and aesthetic standards of the masses.

Today, when the process of spiritual enrichment is becoming increasingly widespread and ramified, the problem of the aesthetic education of the workers must be solved on

a broad scale and by systematic joint efforts of workers in all fields of culture and art. One of socialist culture's most important tasks is not to compromise with backward and vulgar tastes, but, on the contrary, to raise the spiritual criteria of the masses, to awaken their capacity for understanding truly great art.

Lenin described the socialist literature of the future as based on mutual interaction between the past and present experience of humanity. According to Lenin, all the positive experience of history and of the present day should go into a criterion for evaluating artistic phenomena.

The masses, affirmed Lenin, have received the right to genuine great art. This does not mean that it is solely a matter of art as intended for the masses, which is the usual treatment given to this idea in the majority of works on literature. It is primarily a matter of quality, of the exacting criteria to which Lenin was referring when he spoke of the beautiful as a point of departure for the development of an innovatory socialist art.

The causes of the crisis observed in artistic standards are usually sought in the impact of commercialised uniformity and the debased values of so-called "mass culture", which is sometimes wrongly taken as a synonym for the entire popular and democratic culture of our times. This equation is unjustifiable. Lenin's position in the matter is clearly expressed in his statement that the masses have a right to genuine great art. Consequently, the definition, substantiation and defence of superior ideological and artistic criteria always has been, and always will be, the most important task of scientific aesthetics.

In general, the division of contemporary culture into a higher culture and a mass culture is directly or indirectly associated with views which reject the actively creative part of the masses in the creation and appreciation of spiritual values. The notion of doling out cut price, standardised culture to the masses always met with a decidedly negative reaction from Lenin.

Lenin rejects as groundless any division into a cut price, mass culture on the one hand, and a "privileged" snob culture on the other. The mass nature of a truly popular socialist culture, its organic penetration through the layers of the people's existence, is combined with exacting ideological, aesthetic, and artistic criteria. It is alien to any form of com-

promisc with primitive taste, mundane and commercialised standards, or vulgarity of any kind Only a genuine, superior art can deserve to be called truly popular

STRIVING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

We have seen all those in power over there We have had long talks with them, we have observed the position of the people and the country .. It was like a journey into the future . I saw the future it is a dream come true . This was written by Lincoln Stephens on 24th March, 1919, about Lenin, the Communists, and the young Soviet Republic

• The well known American publicist, even in the years of bitter struggle and devastation, saw Russia as a pioneer of the planned civilisation and of revolution, and Lenin and the Communists as the highest personification of human reason, which had, for the first time ever, reached the stage of being able to interpret the past and shape the future

An invaluable and effective characteristic of the scientific outlook on the development of reality is a striving towards the future, an ability to discern clearly, in the present, the shoots of things to come. A historical approach to reality, according to Lenin, means understanding "not only in the sense of explaining the past but also in the sense of a bold forecast of the future and of bold practical action for its achievement".¹

The true shape of the future, its real and most vital artistic principles, must be drawn primarily from the new and developing elements of the present Otherwise, there can be nothing but futile declarations Marx and Lenin insistent-ly stressed this special feature of the socialist outlook on life They rejected the view that the most important and effective aspect of the socialist ideal was the alluring picture it painted of the future They emphasised repeatedly that the strength of the historical prospects of socialism lies in its reliance on the sober historical analysis of reality. N K Mikhailovsky and other Narodnik theoreticians claimed, in their controversy with Lenin, that the spread of Marxism among the masses can be explained by the fact that

¹ V I Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 21, p 72.

it offers advanced prospects for the future Lenin categorically objected to this interpretation of the scientific socialist programme In his work, *What the "Friends of the People" Are And How They Fight the Social Democrats*, he refuted Mikhailovsky's statement that the successful and rapid spread of Marxism among the working classes could be explained, not by its scientific character, but by its mundane and practical ambitions "established by prospects for the future" As the Narodniks represented it, Marxism was successful not because it gave a correct explanation of reality, but because it turned away from reality in favour of alluring prospects, and because it was built on pure faith and promised the workers a better future

Lenin called such explanations rubbishy and false "Everybody knows," he objected, "that scientific socialism never painted any prospects for the future as such it confined itself to analysing the present bourgeois regime, to studying the trends of development of the capitalist social organisation, and that is all 'We do not say to the world,' wrote Marx as far back as 1843 and he fulfilled this programme to the letter, 'we do not say to the world "cease struggling your whole struggle is senseless", all we do is to provide it with a true slogan of struggle We only show the world what it is actually struggling for, and consciousness is a thing which the world *must* acquire, whether it likes to or not ' Everybody knows that *Capital*, for instance the chief and basic work in which scientific socialism is expounded restricts itself to the most general allusions to the future and merely traces those already existing elements from which the future system grows. Everybody knows that as far as prospects for the future are concerned incomparably more was contributed by the earlier socialists, who described future society in every detail, desiring to inspire mankind with a picture of a system under which people get along without conflict and under which the social relations are based not on exploitation but on true principles of progress that conform to the conditions of human nature Nevertheless, despite the whole phalanx of very talented people who expounded these ideas, and despite the most firmly convinced socialists, their theories stood aloof from life and their programmes were not connected with the political movements of the people until large-scale machine industry drew the mass of proletarian workers into the vortex of political life, and until the true slogan of their strug

gle was found. This slogan was found by Marx, 'not a utopian, but a strict and, in places even dry scientist' (as Mr Mikhailovsky called him in the long distant past in 1872), and it was certainly not found by means of prospects, but by a scientific analysis of the present bourgeois regime, by an elucidation of the *necessity* of exploitation under this regime, by an investigation of the laws of its development."¹

The idea of investigating the actual processes of reality and of disclosing the principles of what is new in the present as a necessary and vital foundation for viewing the world in perspective is particularly essential in determining a course for artistic creativeness, and a way of faithfully reproducing life's phenomena in characters and destinies of human beings. It was his ability to interpret the forward movement of human history and culture that made it possible for Lenin to see far into the future, to discern its contours clearly, to discover ways and means of overcoming hostile forces and difficulties.

"I cannot see anything of the sort happening in this dark crystal of Russia," wrote Herbert Wells, "but this little man at the Kremlin can, he sees the decaying railways replaced by a new electric transport, sees new roadways spreading throughout the land, sees a new and happier Communist industrialism arising again. While I talked to him he almost persuaded me to share his vision."²

Historical progress, the revolutionary development of the individual and society, is being vigorously opposed at the present time by the theory of the immutability of human nature and the deceptiveness of human progress. There is nothing new about these theories and they have been disseminated for many decades by reactionary and decadent philosophers, writers, and theoreticians of aesthetics. In *The Decline of the West*, Oswald Spengler had already put forward many propositions tendentiously distorting the concept of time, with the idea of negating it and justifying his pessimistic morphology of history and culture. At the present time, the negation of "human" time is being undertaken by Alain Robbe-Grillet, head of the "literature of things".³ The starting point for the more consistent modernist trends is the notion that the scientific discoveries of the age

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, pp. 184-85.

² H. G. Wells, *Russia in the Shadows*, London, pp. 135-36.

and the actual historical events of the 20th century have led to the collapse of the former concepts of time, inasmuch as the human personality has disintegrated after losing its old faith in the power of reason and purposeful activity. The breakdown of the customary logic with its consequentiality and its categories of cause and effect, together with the total domination of the irrational, have led to the negation of all temporal connections. According to this viewpoint, pathological and illogical characters with a disintegrated consciousness are being offered as the fullest personification of contemporary man's outlook on life, his sense of time having been completely dislocated.

Modernist men of letters refer most frequently to the characters of Samuel Becket. The futile endeavours of his mentally almost completely paralysed heroes, such as Mollo, are seen as most consistently exemplifying "the absurdity of time", the futility, as grotesque as it is tragic, of man's efforts to understand the meaning and significance of the phenomena around him and of his attempts to express this meaning in comprehensible language.

The idea of "the absurdity of time" is inseparable from two other fundamental modernist aesthetic theses, "the absurdity of being" and "the absurdity of consciousness", inasmuch as they mean the destruction of all the associations achieved by reason, and of all the consequentiality, meaning, and relationships of phenomena.

The problem of historical progress, of the revolutionary development of reality, is thrust into the foreground by the objective logic of contemporary life. To show society's progress is one of the chief problems facing literature today.

* * *

The October socialist revolution, in abruptly changing the course of world history, posed the question of the new personality, the man of the future. This tremendous breakthrough in the life of society gave prominence to the task of building a new world, and naturally impelled millions of people to look towards the future. Picturing the shape of things to come had been, in the past, merely a theme of social and artistic utopias, which, in their various ways, had tried to portray the life that would be led by future generations. Scientific socialism imbibed the dreams of the best

people of the past about the new society, and has put these dreams on a realistic historical footing

"The genius of Marx " wrote Lenin in his *The Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism* "consists precisely in his having furnished answers to questions already raised by the foremost minds of mankind " These latter included the creators of the socialist utopias of the past The socialist revolution, changing all that was old and habitual in life, irresistibly impelled the most diverse people to look towards the future Today the future is an inspiration not only to revolutionary minded thinkers, but also to those who have hitherto never emerged beyond the confines of the past and the present and have been spiritually tied to the old world of social relations and ideas Hence the opposite treatment of the future during the first years of Soviet literature

The dawn of the future was enthusiastically hailed in poetry prose and drama During the years of the revolution and the Civil War hundreds of thousands the heroes of the young Soviet literature struggled, accomplished great feats, and sacrificed their lives in the name of this future A striving towards the future is characteristic of the heroes of Soviet literature throughout its entire history The works of Maxim Gorky, Alexander Blok, Vladimir Mayakovsky Alexander Serafimovich, Dmitry Furmanov, Alexander Fadeyev, Mik hail Sholokhov, Leonid Leonov, Alexander Tvardovsky, and Konstantin Fedin, are inspired by the idea of man's progress towards new and improved forms of socialist existence

On the other hand, many writers, past and present, have been terrified by the collapse of the old world, and by uncertainty about the future They perceive the incredibly swift and spectacular changes in cultural life as destruction of culture, a catastrophe threatening the very foundations of human existence There are invaluable comments on this subject in A Morton's book *The English Utopia* The bourgeoisie "have looked forward with confidence, and Utopia was what their best representatives those, who, on the whole, were able to see beyond the narrower class interests and identify the advance of the bourgeoisie with the advance of humanity, saw at the end of the road It was a vision that was hopeful even if not always complacent even if some of the Utopians could see that the pledges of the bourgeois revolution were not being honoured, they were confident that

The principle of merging historical and artistic truth, as expressed in the formula about the faithful reflection of reality in its revolutionary development, is represented by reactionary aesthetics as the fruits of an oversimplified abstract ideal. In reality this principle is a creative achievement, the result of long historical experience of progressive world art.

The movement of time is perceived in various forms, and at each period of history it has its distinguishing characteristics. Lenin gave prominence to the rich historical content of revolutionary periods. In his controversy with Cadet (Constitutional Democrat) publicists, he demonstrated that "it is just the revolutionary periods which are distinguished by wider, richer, more deliberate, more methodical, more systematic, more courageous and more vivid making of history than periods of philistine Cadet, reformist progress. But the Blanks turn the truth inside out! They palm off paltriness as magnificent making of history. They regard the inactivity of the oppressed or downtrodden masses as the triumph of 'system' in the work of bureaucrats and bourgeois. They shout about the disappearance of intellect and reason when, instead of the picking of draft laws to pieces by petty bureaucrats and liberal *penny-a liner* journalists, there begins a period of direct political activity of the common people, who simply set to work without more ado to smash all the instruments for oppressing the people, seize power and take what was regarded as belonging to all kinds of robbers of the people. In short, when the intellect and reason of millions of downtrodden people awaken not only to read books, but for action, vital human action, to make history."¹

In artistic terms, society's revolutionary development is portrayed by Soviet literature in various ways. This portrayal presupposes a profoundly consistent critical rejection of anything anti-humanist, and also a heightened receptivity to the progressive principles of reality. From this ensues a specially developed ability to depict the socialist rise of mankind, the overcoming of individualism, and man's transformation into the advanced revolutionary personality. The portrayal of the forward-moving dynamics of history in art is accomplished through the wealth of its human con-

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 10, pp. 253-54.

tent, through the reproduction of the most subtle mental processes of the characters in their unity with the general movement of history

In the light of Soviet literature's aspirations to depict reality in the process of development, the problem of historical perspectives finds its creative solution. This problem is one of the most vital for the theory and practice of Soviet creative writing since any description of the growth and progress of an individual person and of mankind is inconceivable without solving the problem of the revolutionary perspective. There are no grounds for representing all previous classical literature as devoid of any ability to see into the future. Marx spoke of the merits of Balzac, who was able to find the images of the future in the realities of his own time. Without detracting from the achievements of literature in the past, however, it may be confidently said that the attitude to the revolutionary perspective is one of the most crucial boundary lines dividing critical from socialist realism.

The artist of socialist realism is ahead of his time and he discloses, in the life of his own epoch, the development of the new features which determine the shape of the future. This anticipation of the future does not in any way imply a loss of contact with reality. The artist's creative preoccupation with the new features of his epoch at the moment of their inception and his penetrating view of the world make it possible for him faithfully to mark out the prospects for the future.

Soviet literature's capacity to bring revolutionary perspectives into focus and see the shape of things to come finds its realisation in a historical three-dimensionality, in what Maxim Gorky used to call the three realities: those of the past, the present, and the future.

In an address at the plenum of the Soviet Writers' Union on 7th March, 1935, he stated "Reality does not manifest itself easily and it is essential for us to know more than just the two realities: the past one, and the present one, which we are helping to create. We need to know a third one: the reality of the future. We must somehow incorporate this reality now in our daily lives, and we must try to depict it. Without it, we cannot hope to understand the method of socialist realism."¹

¹ M. Gorky, *Collected Works* Vol. 27 p. 431 (in Russian)

The objective laws of society's development that is, the processes of reality itself stimulate the realist writer to reveal the forward movement of history, the logic of life's revolutionary development

It is not only the reality of the past and the present, but the reality of the future, hitherto inaccessible in its historical concreteness, that has become closer and more accessible to progressive and exploratory art

Historical perspective in socialist literature combines the principles of the future with human activity today, with the effectiveness of realisation of these principles. Foreknowledge in this case never functions as pure speculation but is always wedded to struggle, to creation, to the labours of those building their own future. A far-seeing outlook and the actions of the leading characters in the best Soviet literary works become merged, since the ideal of the future becomes real only in the actual struggle and labours of the working masses. The future takes tangible shape only when it begins to be realised and then the ideal of what is to be finds its fullest and most convincing expression, having become the goal in life, the essence of the characters' destinies, the basis of the conflicts.

The merging of the socialist ideal of the future with the real activities of the masses was stressed many times by Lenin. Demonstrating the unsoundness of the utopian projects put forward by the Narodniks, he showed that the future can be born only from the revolutionary principles of life itself, from the actual principles of what is new and promising, from the principles daily crystallising out in the development of present-day reality.

Genuinely artistic penetration into the future is alien to every form of extrapolationism, which can only produce lifeless rhetorical pronouncements. The more closely the writer is identified with his times, the more deeply he is internally switched into its living dialectics, into the actual processes of the present, and the more firm are his links with the being of Man, the more convincing will be the ideal picture of the future he produces. To achieve this, it is not enough to have a knowledge of reality; there must be comprehensive organic awareness of life's flow of its development, there must be what is often termed a "sixth sense".

In the course of time, Lenin's ideas on art as inspired by revolutionary perspectives and capable of projecting one

into the future are being more and more fully and successfully applied in practice. The impetuous pace of historical progress today thrusts into the foreground the problem of mirroring, in artistic terms, the dynamics of reality. And this determines the far reaching perspectives and broad generalisation of advanced art in our time. As distinct from sociology and economics, literature reveals the relationship between present and future in human destinies.

Our evaluations of the man of the future communist world are not speculation or guesswork, nor are they suppositions based on some remote ideal. The task of moulding the people of the future is certainly not a chapter from a book of soulful utopian dreams, but a daily reality of our existence, embodying the aspirations of many generations. The features of the future man can already be seen today. The people of the future are amongst us now, they are our contemporaries. Their work is the driving force behind our industry, agriculture, and science. They are building new enterprises, taming the virgin lands, making outstanding discoveries in all fields of knowledge, creating ingenious machinery, mastering the atom. The future is beginning today: it is in our ideals, our aspirations, our skills, our accomplishments. The future is untiring labour, concentrated searching in the realm of thought, inspired feelings, a cognition of life and an active influence on its development.

The spectacular forward movement of reality and the impressive accomplishments and discoveries of our day demand of art a new creative quest, the bold artistic representation of the heroes and inspiring atmosphere of the times. Lenin's sociological, philosophical and aesthetic ideas give us precise pointers for the future development of all aspects of creative art in the present and in the future. They inspire the artist to deepen and broaden his ties with reality, to improve his skill, to serve his country selflessly with the word as his weapon. On these firm foundations, an art has been created that faithfully reproduces the features of our time, and it will develop.

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